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VOL. XLVIII No. 6

ADVENTURE

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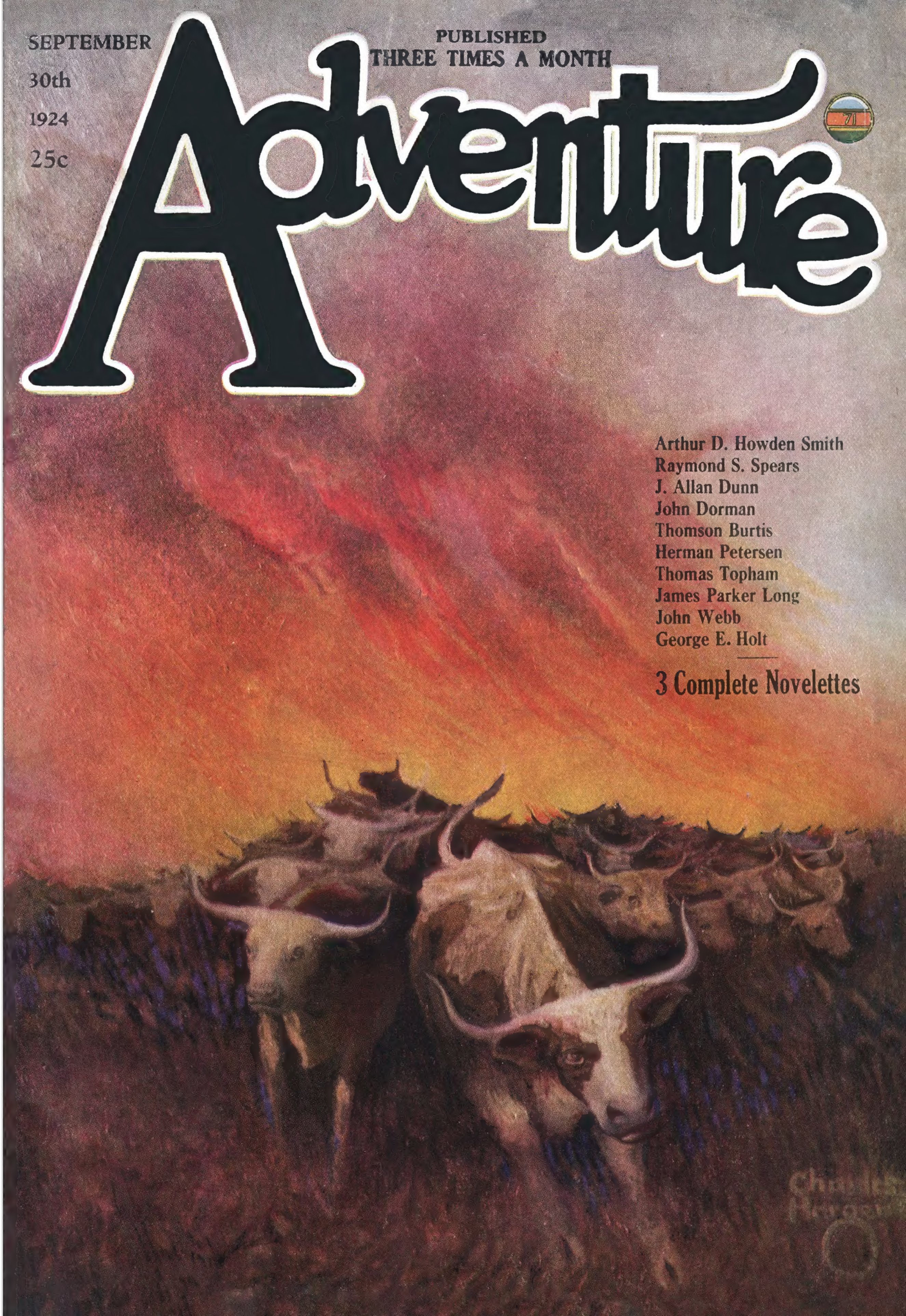
Adventure



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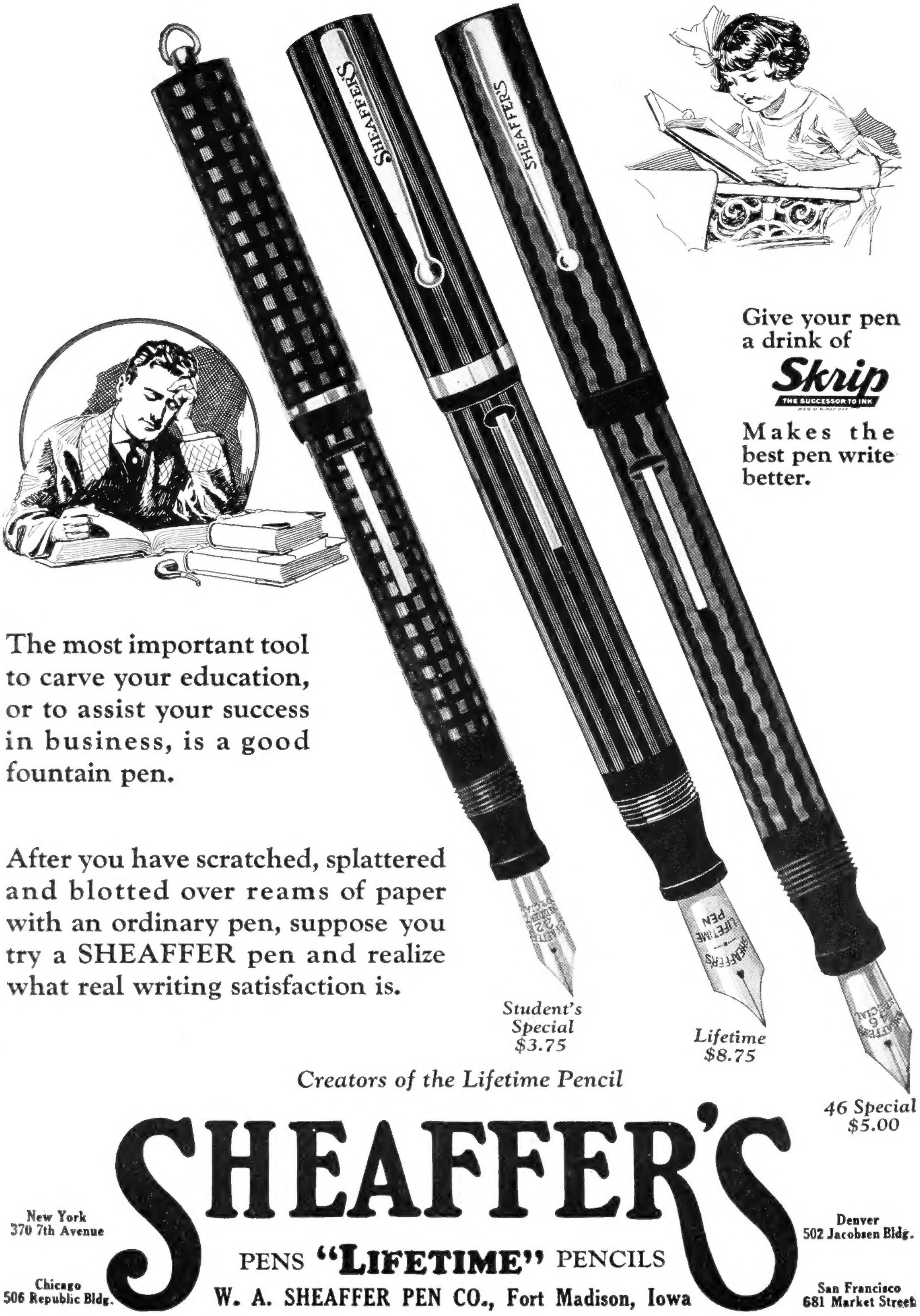

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Quaker Oats
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ADVENTURE
Sept. 30th, 1924

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Volume 48
Number 6

Good Teethkeeping

PLAN NOW

YOUR teeth—how about them? How long since you have had them carefully examined? Do you ever go to the dentist except when riotous pain sends you?

Science has learned that bad teeth may cause any one of a dozen or more serious ailments—rheumatism, joint trouble, neuritis, neuralgia and heart disease.

And it doesn't take a mouth full of diseased teeth to cause acute trouble. One single cavity—if neglected—may be sufficient. This is what happens: A bit of food lodges in a tooth. Decay begins. As the cavity grows larger, the millions of germs which are always present in the mouth go trooping into the tooth. Before long the breaking down and decay of the inside structure of the tooth permit the germs to reach the pulp which is filled with blood vessels and nerves. The germs are picked up by the blood and given a tour of the body. Some of them debark in the heart. Others get off in the joints. Still others call out their station in the lungs or kidneys. Many times the result is years of pain. Sometimes a crippled body. Sometimes—death. All may come from a neglected tooth cavity!

Real trouble is often hidden

There is another source of trouble that is nearly always unsuspected—infection at the roots. This may happen to a tooth that never has been filled. Devitalized teeth—teeth from which the pulp has been removed—and teeth which have been improperly filled frequently develop abscessed roots which pour virulent poison into the system. This often goes on quietly without causing the slightest local pain, although intense agony may be felt in other parts of the body from the effects of the poison.

If you have bridges or crowns, it is well to suspect the foundation and have these teeth X-rayed.

Now what about the children?

Half of the total number of the school-children in United States and Canada have badly diseased teeth which are a definite menace to their health. We can save such children from the suffering and illnesses that we have had, if we all work together for them. How? By teaching children to have clean mouths, and by clean mouths is meant not only clean teeth but clean gums. We must teach them to brush their teeth regularly for two minutes at least twice a day—after every meal if possible.

And we must see that they eat proper food. Milk, eggs, whole wheat bread, fresh vegetables and green foods of all kinds contain the lime needed to build strong, healthy teeth. If mothers-to-be will eat plenty of the foods which contain lime, their children will have better teeth.

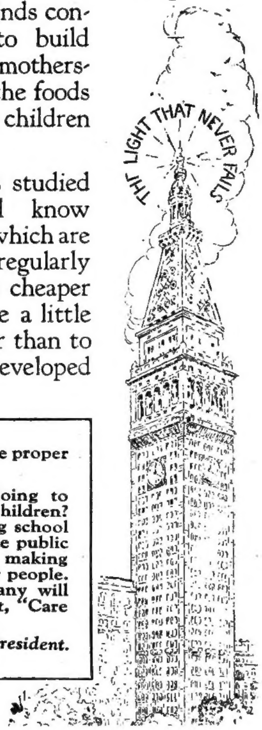
Your dentist—if he has studied modern methods—will know what to do about teeth which are diseased. Visit him regularly every six months. It is cheaper and less painful to have a little work done twice a year than to wait until neglect has developed a serious condition.

Preventive dentistry—oral prophylaxis—is still new to many people. It is a great step in the work being done for public health. Every year taxpayers are assessed hundreds of thousands of dollars for the re-instruction of children who have failed to be promoted because physical disabilities—frequently caused by the teeth—held them back. Teaching mouth hygiene in the schools—with tooth-brush drills and regular twice-yearly examinations and reparative work—will remove much of the disability and save the taxpayers' money.

Oral hygienists are trained to clean the teeth of school children and to teach them to take proper care of their mouths.

What is your particular community doing to promote oral prophylaxis for the school children? Local clubs and organizations are helping school boards to introduce oral hygiene into the public schools. This rapidly growing interest is making for a better educated, healthier, happier people. The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company will be glad to mail, free, a copy of a booklet, "Care of the Teeth" to anyone who requests it.

HALEY FISKE, *President.*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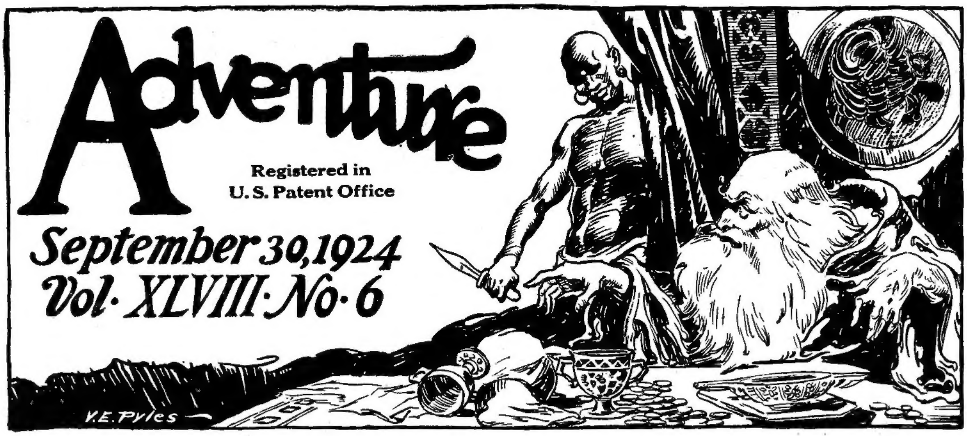

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The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Cover Design . . . . **C. Hargens**

One New Serial, Three Complete Novelettes

SOMEWHERE in the north of India lies the hidden valley of Abor, from which certain rumors concerning a lamasery and its work trickle down to the headquarters of the British secret service and cause *Cottswold Ommony* to be summoned to the office of No. 1. "OM," a six-part story by Talbot Mundy, begins in the next issue.

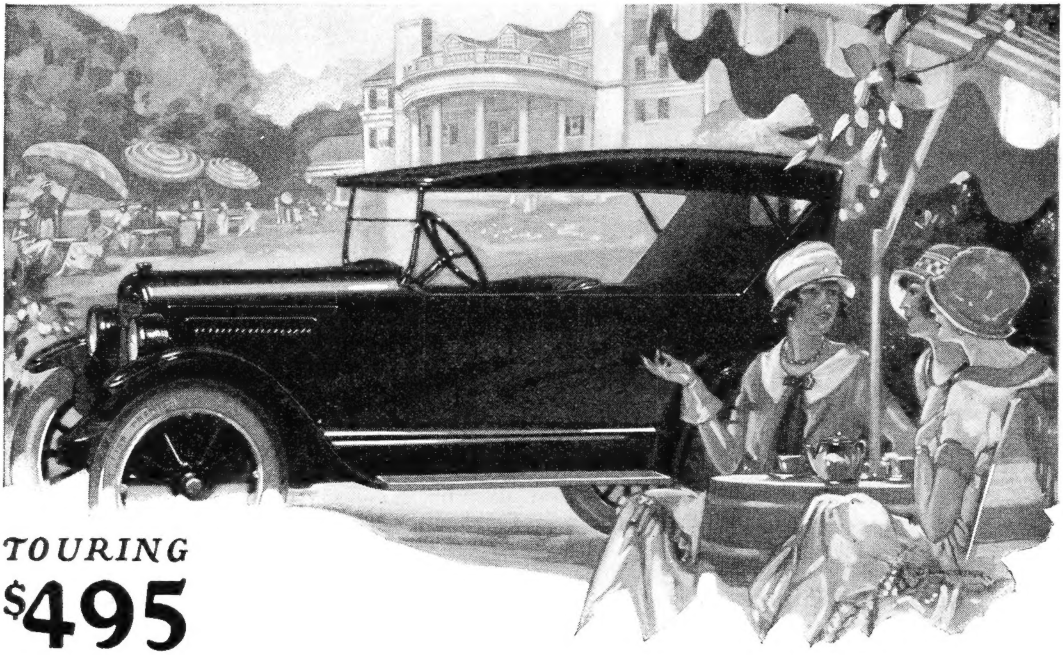
PAVEL, the Russians called him, and he was a marked man on his journey to the Black Sea where lay the hostile Turkish fleet. "FORWARD," a complete novelette of John Paul Jones, by Harold Lamb in the next issue.

THE Slash R paid top wages; *Tad Ladd* and "*Shorty*" were hungry and broke so they didn't lose any time signing on. But they didn't like their employer or "*Frenchy*," his half-caste friend. "THE GRUB-LINE," a complete novelette of the West, by Walter J. Coburn in the next issue.

CLUNK! Clink-a-clunk! The bullets of the Indians rang against the huge copper kettles on the flatboat; and behind each kettle crouched a paleface. "THE BATTLE OF THE KETTLES," a complete novelette by Alvin F. Harlow in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**



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Concentrated in every cake of Fleischmann's Yeast are millions of tiny yeast-plants, alive and active. At once they go to work—invigorating the whole system, clearing the skin, aiding digestion, strengthening the intestinal muscles and making them healthy and active.

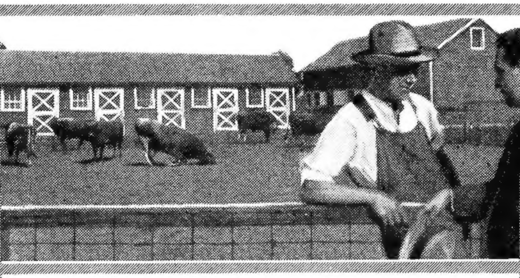
Dissolve one cake in a glass of water (just hot enough to drink) before breakfast and at bedtime. Fleischmann's Yeast, when taken this way, is especially effective in overcoming or preventing constipation.

Or eat two or three cakes a day—spread on bread or crackers —dissolved in fruit juices or milk— or eat it plain.

Write us for further information, or let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Address: Health Research Dept. Z-8, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York.

"*A martyr to indigestion* and constipation, I was as thin as a rake with a complexion like mud. I had tried many different kinds of tonics and laxatives without permanent relief. I was advised to try Fleischmann's Yeast. In about four months my constipation and indigestion had disappeared. I am now in perfect health and look it. My complexion is clear and the envy of all who know me."

(Mrs. P. F. Robin, Mobile, Ala.)



"*When I was constipated* I was always gloomy, melancholy, and unhappy. I got so I did not believe in any remedy at all. But I found on taking Fleischmann's Yeast that I did not have to have faith in it. It is one thing that will do its work whether one has faith in it or not. At the end of about three months I was as well as any man could possibly be. My constipation was gone, all my old headaches, listlessness and gloom left me. It does seem strange that these little yeast cakes can do this thing, but as sure as the sun shines, they can."

(A letter from Mr. T. C. Hinkle of Baldwin, Kan.)

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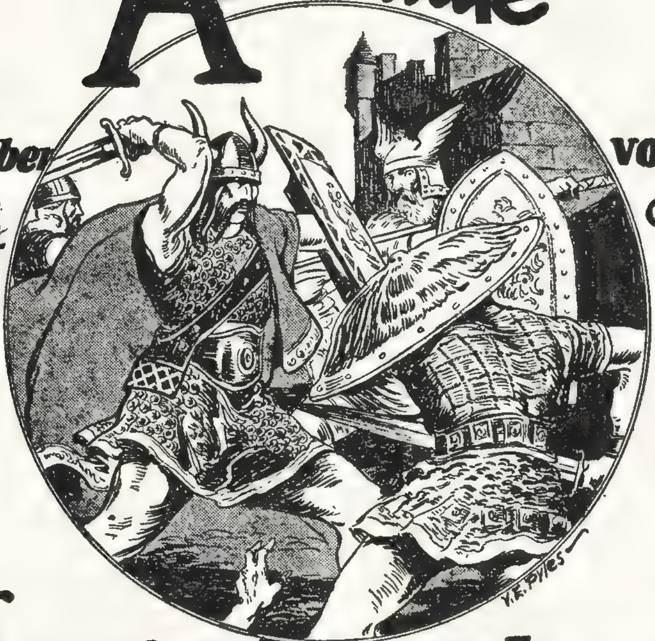
"*I was only 24 years old,* my health, my good looks, and the old time dynamic energy, were gone. A man of wisdom is my physician, but I thought him indeed crazy when he prescribed three yeast cakes a day. But at the end of a month I was much better. For two months more I took the Yeast and now, the old-time buoyancy and energy are mine again."

(Miss Elva Tanner, Clover, Utah)

Adventure

September 30, 1924

VOL·XLVIII No.6



Swain Kingsbane

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Arthur D. Howden Smith

Author of "Swain's Payment," "Swain's Venture," etc.

KING INGI'S pallid cheeks flushed proudly as he swept his eye over the crowded tables that filled his hall from the steps of the dais to the anteroom door, where his scarlet-cloaked Guards stood with shouldered axes, ready to ask of each newcomer his name and business. Four hundred sturdy fighting men were eating and drinking as fast as the serving-varlets could fill their wants, and the rumble of their voices, interspersed with occasional snatches of song, grunts, howls of laughter, snarls of anger and rough-witted jests, echoed from the arching roof-beams and drowned out the roar of the wind that was booming through the Bergen streets with all the might of the Northern Ocean behind it.

The King's twisted figure straightened involuntarily as if some essence of the steaming virility that packed the hall had found its way to nourish his crippled strength. An eagle-light blazed in his eyes and gave the lie to the hump that marred his poor back and the deformed foot which was hidden under the table. And he turned his gaze with unspoken satisfaction upon the line of great chiefs who sat with him at the high table. Seeing them there, he knew that he was at last a King, indeed, he who a few short months past had been the mock of Norway, yes, and of all the North, a King who lacked all but name of the requisites of kingship!

His brothers, Sigurd and Eystein, who shared the kingdom with him, might match

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his supporters in numbers, but where should they find the equal of such counselors as Gregorius Dag's son? Such scalds as Armod, the tall and stately, yonder, or Oddi the Little, whose merry brown face was always contorted in a grimace of laughter? Where a stouter friend and wiser—albeit cautious—than Erling Skakki (Wrynecked), who had married the daughter of King Sigurd the Crusader and whose wealth and power made his name a household word from the country of the Lapps to the Danish skerries?

Ingi scrutinized these and others of his friends until at length his gaze returned to the silent man who sat at his right hand, a tall man with enormous breadth of shoulders, whose ruddy beard fell to his sword-belt and whose cold blue eyes, that held a frosty glint as of heatless fires, frowned across the tables in apparent effort to see beyond the end wall that reared its timbers high overhead.

Others ate and drank and talked. This man had beside him only a small mug of water, and his plate had been picked bare long since. When others spoke to him, always with an odd deference, he answered shortly, and then relapsed into his silent scrutiny of the farther wall. He was dressed well, but not richly; his cloak, cast over the back of his chair, was a plain garment of wolfskins designed for warmth and comfort; his sword-hilt was of tooth (ivory) undecorated with gold or silver; he wore no jewels. Yet if he chanced to meet any other man's gaze that other man looked quickly away or bent his head or stepped up to see if the silent man required aught of him.

And of all those at the high table, saving alone the two scalds, he was the humblest in birth, a man of no title, and an outlander at that. Swain Olaf's son was his name, and he was Orkney-born, holding great estates in those parts and known wherever Norse keels drove as a viking-farer and warrior of renown.

It was this Swain who held the life-long feud with Olvir Rosta, grandson of Frakork the Witch, for Frakork and Olvir betwixt them had been the bane of Swain's father and mother and his two brothers. Frakork he burned in her own skalli, as has been told elsewhere; but Olvir was a lusty chief and a wily, and although Swain pursued him from one world's end to the other and exchanged many hard knocks with him Olvir in the end always contrived to elude him.

After Swain had driven him from the Orkneyar Olvir fled to Mikligard (Constantinople) and took service there with the Greek Emperor Manuel and came to command the Varang Guards; but Swain heard of his enemy's fortune and fared thither in company with Erling Skakki and the two scalds, Armod and Oddi, and other illustrious folk, and in the result Swain hunted Olvir forth of Mikligard, and to escape Swain's wrath Olvir must flee westward across the Northern Ocean to Greenland.

Swain, learning of this by chance, pursued him, and Olvir left Greenland and fared on westward and south across the dread seas men call the Ginnunga-Gap (Gap of Doom) to Wineland the Good. But again Swain discovered his purpose and took up the pursuit, and after they had fought a great battle in Wineland, first with each other and afterward perforce in company against the Skraelings, Olvir made off by night, took the ship in which Swain had fared thither, squared his back upon the land men called the Skraelings' Coast, and sailed eastward for Norway, where he entered the service of King Sigurd, and won much merit with that King by reason of his craft and experience.

Now all these facts and yet others were widely discussed by men of every rank in all the Northern countries, and King Ingi prevailed upon Erling Skakki—who was almost the only lenderman (baron) who remained faithful to him—to invite Swain to Norway, in order to give the King counsel as to how he might contrive to save his crown and likewise his head. For because of his crippled condition the warrior folk of all degrees looked down upon King Ingi with contempt, his brothers begrudged him his place and matters had turned out in such wise that he could not count upon the aid of any man except those house-carls who served in his ranks for pay.

Swain accepted the invitation for that he and Erling were old comrades in arms; but presently, perceiving that Ingi was not deficient in spirit, despite the handicap of his twisted body, he devised an exploit by means of which the King's courage was demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Norse folk, and the lendermen and boendr and other chiefs of Ingi's section of the country flocked to offer him tribute and loyalty.

"He is not to be termed niddering, this King, who can swing his sword in the shield-wall and slay his enemies, notwithstanding he has a hump upon his back and a lame foot," affirmed men of all factions.

And others said, debating the subject around the skalli fires:

"Ho, carls, if Swain serves Ingi that is enough for me. You would never see the Orkneyman taking table-room from a king who was backward or lacking in honor."

Some kings might have resented owing so much to the aid of a man who was of common birth, yes, or to any man, kin or stranger. Also, Swain was none of those who bow the head to kings. Kings and jarls, he was wont to say, continually required curbing, and much of his own fame came from the deeds he had performed in seating and unseating jarls in the Orkneys. What he thought he said; what he liked he did. If he irked any man thereby he refused to be concerned, and if the man, being irked, undertook to assail him, Swain fought back as readily against one of rank and means as against a chief of his own station.

Therefore it might have been expected that King Ingi would soon have wearied of his gruff speech and brusk ways, more especially as Ingi was like most crippled men, inclined to moodiness and periods of irritated depression. Yet there is this to be said of Ingi, that he was not loath to acknowledge service, and a debt once recognized he never repudiated. In his own queer way he was as great a hero as Swain, and in after-years the scalds sang of him that had his back been straight he would have become a second Olaf the Glorious. He entertained for Swain a feeling he yielded to no other man, not even to Erling or Gregorius Dag's son.

"Swain made me King, as my father made me man," he said to the jealously inclined who would have bred trouble.

Some thought of these matters was in the King's mind as he returned his gaze to Swain, sitting silent at his right hand the while the hall echoed with shouts of "Skoal!" and the house-carls compared one another and the great folk at the high table debated questions of politics and warfare.

"Well, Swain," he said, "it appears that you are able to see something which is hidden from the rest of us."

"It is not that I see anything, but that I would give much to be able to see what is ahead of us," replied Swain, withdrawing his eyes from the hall's smoky depths.

"It is a well-known saying of yours that you are no forelooker," observed the King.

"True," acknowledged Swain; "and I have sometimes regretted that I had no traffic with warlocks and witches, who could see beyond the rim of the night. Albeit there was a man named Swain Briostreip (Breaststrap) who crossed my path in my youth, and he had the gift, so men said; but it did not avail to save him from me."

"Then of what use is it?" asked the King.

"You say well," answered Swain. "But I daresay it had its conveniences. Take, for example, my present situation. Here I have bided with you throughout the Winter, so that I might be ready to aid you if the Kings, your brothers, launched any blow at you; but Sigurd and Eystein have done no more than talk and curse over their ale-horns and promise what they would achieve in the future."

"That is not strange," said King Ingi. "You yourself have said that it was not to be expected that they would attempt anything offhand. That is not the way kingdoms are won."

"Ah," said Swain, "but while we watch over your fortunes, King, my property in the Orkneyar is left to the care of Erik Crooked-Legs, my forecastleman, who is a wise carl enough, but not myself."

A shade of perturbation settled upon the King's brow.

"You would never think of faring from me, Swain!" he exclaimed. "Without you I should be——"

"Bah, you have now a sufficient array of lendermen and boendr to dignify your court," rejoined Swain; "and in Erling and Gregorius, at least, you have counselors who are not likely to lead you far astray."

The King shook his head vigorously.

"Without you I am lost, Swain, and that is the bare truth. It is not perhaps greatly to my credit, but I believe that you are a man who prizes the truth above vanity."

Swain's eyes focused for three breaths upon Ingi's wan face, grooved by the pains he had known since infancy—when, so the scalds reported, he had been twisted in body through injuries inflicted upon him as a parentless babe because the marshal of his dead father had been obliged to carry him in the sling of his belt on the battle-field.

"Yes, you are a truth-teller," Swain conceded at last. "That is one reason why I am at pains to aid you, King. The other reasons are that you are as valorous as a crippled man may be and that it pleases me to do what I do."

The flush returned to Ingi's cheeks.

"I have rewarded you richly for what you have done," he reminded the Orkneyman.

Swain shrugged his shoulders.

"But if I had not had profit of you, King, I must have taken it otherwhere. It is not my policy to do something for nothing. No man ever improved his property in that way—and I have two sons who some day will succeed to whatever I possess, and I hope carry on the honor of my name."

King Ingi laughed.

"There is that about you, Swain," he replied, "which occasionally pricks me, but then I remember that you do truly perform what you say you will undertake; and better 'rough tongue, rugged honor' than courtiers' speech and the crooked knee, with deceit in the background. But we talk at random. Is it indeed your intention to leave me? I will offer any inducement in my power to make it worth your while to abide here longer."

The frown mantled Swain's brow again.

"It is not my desire to leave you, King," he answered; "and be sure I have no thought of doing aught which might endanger what we have already attained to. But I am not happy sitting idly in a warm skalli. As you know, I am no man for ale-drinking and mead-swigging, and I care less for scald's talk than a deaf man. It is in my mind that the time is come——"

HE BROKE off at sign of a commotion at the opposite end of the hall, where a couple of the red-cloaked Guards of the King had crossed their axes in front of the door which opened into the skalli's antechamber.

"Who comes at this hour?" he exclaimed, running his eye along the line of faces at the high table. "Are any of your chiefs expected?"

"Not that I am aware of," denied the King. "Whoever he is, the Guards give him admission."

For the pair of axmen stood aside, being satisfied by their query of the newcomer, and a man strode into the hall and blinked his eyes in the red glare of the torches that were thrust into iron holders on every pillar. He was a short man, and a broad, and while his legs were straight he seemed to roll in his gait. He had a square head with slanting, narrow-slitted eyes, which had a trick of flitting the circuit of a room without a movement of his neck muscles. His beard was short and gray.

"A shipman, by the look of him," said the King.

And he leaned over the edge of the high table and addressed one of his chamberlains, who sat at the nearest of the long common tables.

"A stranger has just passed the Guards, Kalli," he said. "Go you and ask his business. If he desires speech of me fetch him here."

"Hearing is obedience, Lord King," replied Kalli.

"I could swear I have seen that carl before," muttered Swain. "This is not the first time I have marked those slant eyes. But where?"

They said no more until Kalli, having questioned the stranger, turned and escorted him up the hall to the dais.

"He is a Bretlander (Britisher), Lord King," announced Kalli, "and says he has business with you."

The stranger bobbed his head to the King, and his little eyes shot back and forth from the King's face to Swain's.

"Greeting, Lord King," he said in a very deep voice, speaking the Norse words with a kind of nasal accent. "Will Salter is my name, shipman of Sandwich town. But saving your presence, my errand is with Swain Olaf's son there as much as with yourself."

"Does his name recall him, Swain?" asked the King with a smile.

"It means nothing to me," returned Swain shortly. "Say, Bretlander, have we met before this?"

Will Salter bobbed his head again.

"I am the shipman whose cobble you overhauled in the Western Seas when you pursued Olvir Rosta from Mikligard. It was I gave you the course he steered."

"Ho, now I do remember!" exclaimed Swain. "Olvir had plucked you bare, and for your news I let you go free."

The Bretlander's features became suffused with a purple tide of blood; his breath came in quick, grunting gasps.

"Ah, that you did!" he snarled. "And if Olvir plucked me that voyage he has stripped me on this."

A grim light of interest flickered in Swain's eyes.

"So he stripped you, Will Salter! Well, you are not the first to feel the weight of his hand. Think yourself lucky you escaped with life."

"I escaped with life, and it may be a bit more," answered the shipman. "It is for that I am come hither."

"And what is it?"

The Bretlander's expression became bluntly crafty.

"Why, as to that, Swain, I have lost all, and am of a mind to earn——"

"Take care," warned Swain in tones that dripped with menace. "I am not one to bargain with. Answer me, and afterward we will talk of reward—or punishment."

Will Salter squinted up at him appraisingly.

"If I have been a fool, I have been a fool," he pronounced then. "So be it. You have the repute of being fair, Swain, and I can do no more than trust to you and the King."

"It will be only to trust to me for a merciful end," growled Swain, "if you do not answer swiftly."

"Time enough, time enough," joined the Bretlander with growing coolness. "A man who has slipped in and out of Olvir's jaws and seen the blood-eagle carved in men's backs for the wringing of their pocket treasures hidden beneath a wharf—what has such a man to fear from you or any honorable warrior? You may slay me, and I do not much care if that is your decision, seeing that all I have to look forward to is whatever revenge I can secure against Olvir."

"Revenge against Olvir is a commodity in which I deal without suffering partners," answered Swain softly. "My tally is longer than yours. What are your tidings?"

"Why, this—and they concern Sigurd more than Olvir, for when all is said and reckoned, Olvir is no more than Sigurd's dog, to slay and plunder such poor Outland folk as I at the King's pleasure. Yes, yes, I will get on, Swain; but every man to his own trade, and if I can not speak in my way I can speak in no way.

"After Olvir's carls seized me and my crew for venturing into Throndhejm port before the trading-season opened, as they said, I was cast into a room in the King's skalli, next that in which the chiefs sat, the while they were tormenting my folk and waiting to see what they learned from them. And as I lay there I heard the converse that went on betwixt them, the purport of which——"

"You are long in coming to the point, Will Salter," rapped Swain.

"And being once come thither, am not delayed in telling my tale," retorted the shipman sturdily. "Sigurd and Olvir and others of his folk are to meet King Eystein in mid-Lent on the plea of hunting to pass the fast-season on the property of Thore Flettir's son in the Uplands. Where that may be I can not say; it is for you to discover——"

"All men know it," interrupted King Ingi. He leaned forward eagerly. "Tell us, shipman, what else you heard. Was there talk of what the Kings plotted?"

"That there was, Lord King, and plenty of it. Men said openly and unashamed, and King Sigurd amongst them, that they must contrive together to arrange your uncrowning."

Ingi's hands opened and shut.

"So!" he hissed. "The fools! Having let me grow eagle's wings, do they think to clip me and stay my flight?"

The Bretlander regarded him doubtfully.

"As to the wings and the rest of it, Lord King, I can not say, being a plain man. But what they said was that you waxed overpowerful, and it was best to strip you of your kingship. Olvir was for slaying you, and Sigurd, too; but they said that Eystein was for leaving you two or three farms and the means to support twenty or thirty men."

The King's face was horrible in its passion.

"Oh, —— curse them!" he whispered harshly. "The pair of them! May they rot in ——! My father's sons, and they—Swain, Swain, you are but just complaining for that there was naught to occupy you. Heed the Bretlander's tale!"

"I do heed it," replied Swain slowly. He turned to the shipman. "Can you tell us more?"

"No, save it be that the Kings meet under pretext of settling the man-bote Sigurd shall pay for slaying two of King Eystein's court men. The chiefs at Sigurd's court said that the time was come to sink their own differences with Eystein and unite against the weaker.

" 'Afterward,' quoth Olvir, 'we shall strive if there can not be but the one King in Norway.'

"And at that they all cheered."

"The one King!" rasped Ingi. "Ah, yes, Swain, we shall see to it that there is one King in Norway! One King is enough. What was it you were wont to say in the Orkneys? 'One jarl rules by might, two jarls rule with justice.' But kings are different. Three Kings make for weakness in the land; the folk fall apart; there is endless bickering. Two Kings would be forever wrangling amongst themselves, disputing taxes, scat and portdues. One King—ah, with one King we shall see the old days return when Harald Haardrada made Norway feared by all!"

"We are a long way from that day yet," commented Swain dryly.

King Ingi regarded him with feverish intensity, heedless of the Bretlander, who still stood in front of them, or of the other chiefs at the high table, who were leaning forward to hear what was passing.

"Yes, but we shall reach that day," he cried. "For Sigurd and Eystein I shall have no mercy, Sigurd because he would have slain me and Eystein because he would have humbled me. He would leave me with 'two or three farms and the means to support twenty or thirty men.' For that speech I will repay him with a plot of six feet of good Norse earth and a cloak to wrap him in."

The Bretlander cleared his throat.

"My ship is taken from me, Lord King, and I——"

"Go with this chamberlain," interrupted the King. "Kalli, see that this man is comfortably lodged, and in the morning do you either purchase him a ship suitable for his purposes or else weigh out to him so many silver marks as will satisfy his wants."

Will Salter's narrow eyes rolled desperately from nose to eyebrows.

"Well spoken, Lord King!" he clamored. "Here are justice and honor! I will speak well of you in every land and——"

"Go, go," commanded the King. "Only see that you keep your tongue between your teeth, and let me not hear that you have consorted with my enemies."

"If your enemies are all of Olvir Rosta's stamp you need be at no fears upon that score!" exclaimed the shipman feelingly. "Twice now I have met with him, and all I can say is that I shall burn two candles in the Olaf Church for the ensurement of Swain's effort the next time they encounter."

And so, with Kalli plucking continually at his arm and drawing him away in the midst of his speech, the Bretlander was led from the room.

THE King stilled nervous fingers by an effort, and lifted his eyes to encounter Swain's.

"What next?" he asked. "We know our enemies plan to strike, but little good will that do us."

"On the contrary, it is likely to do us great good," replied Swain. "If we know where Sigurd and Eystein meet to lay their plans it should not be difficult for us to clap an ear to what goes on between them. And if there has been trouble between them in the past, why, perhaps we can take steps to keep that trouble boiling in the future."

Ingi's features lighted up with a gust of relief.

"I might have known you would have conceived a plan," he said.

"No, no," answered Swain cautiously. "I have no plan, but rather the ground upon which to build one. Plan as far as you see; that is my way. If you go beyond that you trip upon shadows."

"And what is your plan?"

"I will go to Thore Flettir's son's estate in the Uplands and discover what is intended."

"Not so, Swain," returned the King, disappointed. "You are too well known. And what could one man do against many?"

"It is because there will be many in attendance upon the two Kings that I shall not be recognized. Likewise, I shall not go dressed as I am. I will wear old raiment like a petty bondi's or merchant's, and I will hack off this beard under my chin. Depend upon it, King, no man—save one, and him I shall be vigilant against—will know me amongst the scores who will be coming and going about Thore's place."

"But alone, Swain!"

"With many attendants I should indeed declare myself to all. No, King, I shall go with one companion, and he will be—" Swain ranged the high table's row of warriors—"Oddi the Little. For Oddi is quick of wit and agile, and he knows the Uplands by reason of his journeys as a scald, as I do not."

"There is no use to argue with you," said the King. "And if any man can accomplish this feat it is you. I wish only that my hump did not proclaim me in every company."

II

THERE was much discussion among King Ingi's court men of Swain's plan to spy upon the meeting of Sigurd and Eystein, and several of the lendermen demanded that he should take them with him.

"What?" said Gregorius. "Is it for you, Swain, who are an Outlander, to venture all the risks in the King's service? It will be said that we Norsemen are folk of little worth."

This Gregorius was a tall man, very lusty of his body, with golden hair and beard. He had a voice like a trumpet and was never known to show fear of any odds. He came of a powerful and wealthy family, and it was said of him that he was the bravest of the lendermen who followed King Ingi, even as Erling Skakki was the wisest—but this is not to say that Erling was in any way deficient in courage. The truth is that he was wilier than Gregorius; and thanks to this, as shall be shown in its proper place, he outlived him, and came in due time to such a station as few men ever attained.

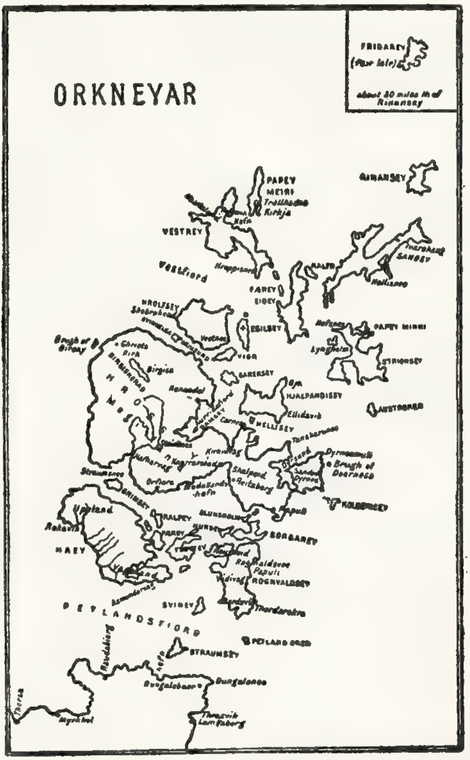
"It is because I am an Outlander that I can hope to elude suspicion when I go to Thore's estate, Gregorius," Swain answered now. "Moreover, I am older than any of you and may say without reflection upon you that I am therefore the more experienced. And if that is not sufficient, I will recall to you that the message was fetched hither by the Bretlander because he knew me, as also that I am at feud with Olvir Rosta and shall find in this exploit a means to wreak vengence upon him."

"Those are strong arguments," Gregorius admitted.

"But strong arguments or weak, do not forget, Swain, that it was I who persuaded you to enter King Ingi's service," urged Erling. "It is not for me to sit back and allow you to imperil yourself without my assistance."

"Not for nothing are you dubbed Skakki," rejoined Swain, pointing to Erling's neck, which he carried to one side by reason of a badly healed wound. "How should you disguise yourself, who are familiar in every district in Norway?"

"I shall not object to danger if I can be at hand to aid you in case you require aid," retorted Erling.


ORKNEYAR
FRIDAREY
(Fair Isle)
about 30 miles N of Rinansey
RINANSEY
PAPEY MEIRI
Trollhædna Kirkja
Hofn
VESTREY
Vestfiord
SANDEY
FAREY
EIDEY
HROLFSEY
EGILSEY
PAPEY MINNI
Lyngholm
STRIONSEY
VIGR
GAREKSEY
HJALPANDISEY
Ellidavik
HELLISEY
Kirkiuvag
Brough of Deerness
Skalpeid
Geitaberg
Orfiara
Upland
Rekavik
HAEY
RALFEY
BORGAREY
Papuli
ROGNVALDSEY
SVINEY
PETLANDSFIORD
STRAUMSEY
Dungalsnes
Dungalsbaer
Thorsa
Myrkhol
Thrasvik
Lambaborg

"No, no," said Swain with a twinkle in his frosty eye. "You forget, Erling, that you are wed to a princess, and it becomes you to raise up a son to profit by the power you may win—for it is well said that however a man prospers it is like rain sifted down a rat-hole unless he have a son to continue his fortune after him."

Several men chuckled at this, for it was widely recognized among Erling's friends that he hungered for a son, thinking that a man who came of as good stock as his own and with a king's daughter for mother might aspire to rank with the highest.

"Swain speaks sensibly, as is his custom," said King Ingi at this point, and his face twisted into a satirical grimace, the nearest he generally came to a smile. "You are the one of us who I would cherish most, Erling, not only because I love you, but because I would be glad to see you with a son in whose veins ran my father's blood. The Saints know I am not one who is ever likely to obtain women's favor with this broken body of mine! And you may be thankful for that, else I would have off your head for plotting to further yourself after I am gone."

There was a moment of uncomfortable silence. Ingi had spoken words which had been in many men's minds for months.

"It was my thought to serve you in this matter, King," said Erling with dignity. "Whatever fortune awaits me, I am your man, as——"

"Well I know that," the King interrupted impatiently. "I said what I said. It meant what it seemed to mean—no more, no less. Be thankful you do not serve one of my brothers. And indeed, Erling, while I do not seek to belittle your loyalty, one reason why I am as sure of you as I am is that you have more to gain by being faithful to me than by switching to any other."

"But Swain is my friend, and it is due to me that he came hither."

"Swain has stated his wishes, and be sure that you would not assist him by lending him your company when that wry neck of yours would be as open a proclamation of who you are as my hump would be a sign manual of my royalty!"

Several other chiefs spoke up, offering to go; but Swain brushed them all aside, the King biding silent, with his chin propped on one hand, his deep-set eyes brooding inscrutably upon the house-carls who drank at the long tables beneath the dais.

When all others had spoken, Armod, who was called the Scald, rose from his seat, twisting a golden lovelock around one finger. A beauty was his that was altogether manly, yet struck to men's hearts as sharply as the loveliest woman's face.

"If all have said their say," he began in his low, drawling speech, "it may be permitted to me to ask why Swain should single out Oddi as the one of us two scalds to venture with him? I say nothing in Oddi's despite, although many might chide him for the crudeness of his verses——"

"In your teeth, Armod!" cried Oddi. "My verses are fighting-men's songs, not lays to draw smiles from the cross-bench fillies."

"In their way, they are doubtless good enough," assented Armod gently. "Yet I have still to hear the chief who would select you rather than myself, did he desire to be assured of having a proper scald by him to——"

"One of these days," growled Swain, "I will hew me off so much of each scald's head as will suffice to stifle their tongues. They are good men of their hands and honest comrades, but for this continual verse-framing and arguing with one another."

"It was we—" began Oddi.

And Armod chimed in:

"Without scalds even you, Swain, would lack the reputation which has——"

"Peace, peace, the pair of you!" Swain's fist hammered the tabletop. "I do not take a scald with me, Armod, but a warrior and a guide. All I ask of Oddi is that he should keep his mouth shut, his ears open and his sword ready."

"In that case, Swain, you do me wrong," insisted Armod, "seeing that I am both larger than Oddi and——"

"Yes, you have a face that no man or woman is like to forget, no matter how it be disguised," retorted Swain. "Oddi I can make look like a Lapp thrall or an Irlandman (Irishman), but you — gods! Sigurd would be having you up to the dais as soon as you entered the skalli!"

King Ingi settled back in his chair and stared curiously at Swain.

"It is my thought that you had best keep yourself from Sigurd's eyes," he said. "You are no man to be passed over in any crowd."

"Bide until you see me short-bearded and round-shouldered," answered Swain. "My place in Thore's skalli will be amongst the serving-varlets."

"Still do I think that you will sink steel in noble flesh," returned the King. "Another than you I would not suffer to pass the gate upon this journey, Swain, but I know that you will not heed me, having made up your mind to the venture, and it is the truth that where another man must slip and fall you can weave your way like a shadow amongst the roofbeams."

III

WINTER was late that year, so there was still snow upon the ground when Swain and Oddi fared from Bergen. They rode horses which King Ingi presented to them, and were garbed as became trading-folk. The only weapons they bore were their swords.

Few travelers were abroad at that season, especially on the eastward roads that penetrated the rough, forest-clad country of the Uplands, where there were no large towns, and to those wayfarers whom they did meet and the folk who gave them night quarters Swain simply said that he and his comrade were in quest of ship-timber to be floated into Hardanger Fjord with the breaking of the Spring thaw.

This was ample excuse for his presence in those parts, and there was likewise that about the shambling gait and slovenly posture he assumed which forbade extended questioning.

"That shipwright has taken viking-luck," his hosts would remark after he had left them.

The two comrades traveled without incident until they were within a day's ride of Thore's estate, and sought night quarters at a tavern kept by a man named Knut, who was from the Sognside. Like all tavernkeepers, Knut was eager for news and gossip, and he came and sat with Swain and Oddi after he had served them a meal.

"You are early abroad," he said when Swain had explained that they were in search of ship-timber.

"The early merchant reaps the most profit," answered Swain with a shrug.

"That is true," agreed Knut. "Where do you expect to make your purchase?"

"I do not know," replied Swain. "I had thought of visiting Thore Flettir's son, who is said to have plenty of timber which is accessible."

"It is unfortunate that you plan to go to Thore," said the tavernkeeper, "for he is entertaining King Sigurd, and King Eystein is expected to be with him also. They are to hunt, and in the mean time Thore has posted guards on all the roads thereabout and excludes any strangers who approach."

Knut grinned suggestively.

"It is likely enough," he added, "that the hunting they do will not be confined to the reindeer."

"This is bad news!" exclaimed Swain. "But how is it that you know so much, if all strangers are forbidden Thore's place?"

"The countryfolk go and come unhindered," explained Knut. "Thore is glad to have them to aid as beaters in the hunting, and in serving the Kings and their men, for indeed he is hard put to it to satisfy such a multitude."

"Much good that will do me," grumbled Swain. "Well, I must take myself higher into the mountains in search of some one whose timber will be more difficult to transport, no doubt. It is ill luck that the Kings choose this time to sojourn in the Uplands."

He yawned and stretched himself.

"I do not know how you feel, comrade," he said to Oddi; "but my limbs are stiff from the road, and a bed in Knut's straw appears comfortable to me."

"To those whose luck has failed them sleep is the only comfort possible," answered Oddi.

They rose, and Knut took a torch from its holder and conducted them into a chamber at one side of his tavern. As he was leaving, Swain yawned again and called after him:

"But what did you mean when you spoke of the Kings hunting other than reindeer, Knut?"

The travenkeeper blinked his eyes at his guests.

"It is well known that there are three Kings in Norway," he returned non-committally.

"Hutatut!" cried Swain. "Do you mean that there is to be fighting?"

"When Kings meet in private behind the shields of their house-carls it is very probable that they discuss how the ravens shall be fed," answered Knut with a superior air.

"Oh, holy Saints!" protested Swain. "What is a poor shipwright to do if all the great folk are to start sword-music? This is the worst news yet!"

Knut shut the door without answering this, and went to his own bed.

"That is a big, strapping carl who tarries with us the night," said his wife—she was a Bergen woman, Steinvor Kari's daughter—as he came to her. "Nor is the little man with him without strength. They have the look of warriors, for all their sober garb."

Knut laughed scornfully.

" 'The look of warriors!' " he repeated.

"This shows what poor judges women are. I have never seen such mean-spirited folk. The big one was ready to weep because I hinted to him that there was war-talk brewing at Thore Flettir's son's."

Steinvor was silent a moment.

"It has been truly said that 'the largest heart is in the sheep's breast,' " she replied then.

So soon as the door had closed upon the tavernkeeper's back Oddi turned to Swain, making no attempt to conceal the uneasiness he felt.

"What is to do, Swain?" he whispered. "We had not bargained on this."

"No," said Swain calmly. "And it is probable that other things will arise which we had not foreseen, either."

"But if we can not go to Thore's——"

"Knut said only that strangers were denied the roads."

"Well?"

"We shall not go as strangers. In the morning we will depart from the road and circle into the forest. Afterward we will go to Thore's by the forest-paths, and instead of being shipwrights we will be charcoal-burners, hungry to gape at kings, and fill their house-carls' ale-horns "

Swain reflected further, squatting in the straw with his cloak wrapped around him.

"Yes," he went on at last, "and I think, too, that I shall become a half-wit, Oddi. Yes, that will be best, I shall be your brother, and a natural. When men speak to me I will mumble in my beard, and it will be for you to answer."

Oddi regarded him with head aslant and eyes very bright.

"Heh-heh, but this is a better plan than the one we began with," he exclaimed. "At the same time, I remind you that charcoal-burners do not ride horses."

"True," assented Swain. "We must find a clearing in the forest, and if possible, a hut—or we can build a shelter in which to leave them. We must also contrive to make our clothing such as forest folk would wear. But this is for the morrow."

IV

FROM Knut's tavern Swain and Oddi rode through the forest for the better part of a day, trending up into the hills above the valley in which Thore's farms lay. Once about noon they heard from far off the blowing of horns, but the huntsmen did not come near them, and when they tarried on the verge of dusk in a clearing of the wood they had the satisfaction of knowing that no man's eyes had seen them since their parting with the tavernkeeper.

They chose this particular clearing because a trickle of water oozed out of a rocky wall under an immense boulder, and it was a light task for them to roof over the space between the wall and the boulder with young trees and boughs hacked off larger growths. In this shelter was ample room to halter the horses and provide beds for themselves, and for heat they built a rousing fire. With pine-branches to rest upon they required no more for comfort, and under Swain's directions they spent the early hours of the night in preparing for the morrow's undertaking.

First, he required that they secure a great quantity of succulent branches and bark strips for the horses. Next, he charred sticks in the fire and ground them into a fine powder between two flat stones. This powder, moistened with snow, he rubbed diligently into the skin of his face, neck, chest, hands and arms, even into his hair and beard, and he made Oddi do the same. So that in a very short while the two were become as black as Serkmen (North Africans) and Swain's ruddy beard was a dingy tangle of smutted hairs. He was utterly unlike the grim, saturnine figure that had inspired dread wherever it appeared. Oddi, for his part, became a grimy troll.

"If the Dverge (Dwarf) folk come out of the rocks tonight, Swain, they will take me for one of themselves," he laughed, regarding his reflection in the moonlit depths of the pool which formed beneath the trickle from the cliff. "But what will they call you? By the Mass, they will hail you for Fornjotr, the most ancient of the giants, whom Ran wedded—and made the sea their bath! You are a fearsome sight—enough to fright a sorcerer!"

"That is not how you are to look upon me," replied Swain. "I am no more than your dog, a half-wit whom you utilize as an animal. School yourself, Oddi. Treat me with contempt; snap at me; beat me; lead me by the ear; laugh at me. But never let yourself be betrayed into kindliness or consideration."

"I will remember," promised Oddi, curling himself up to sleep in the pine-boughs. "Only do you remember to forget all I put upon you. Heh, you were well advised not to take Armod with you in my stead! I do not see the tall one begriming that yellow beard of his. Rather would he have withstood the carving of the blood-eagle on his back!"

In the morning they smutted themselves further, discarded their cloaks, and dirtied and tore the remainder of their raiment. They also decided that it would not be fitting for men of their degree to wear swords, and therefore they unbelted their blades and left them hung to their horses' saddles. In place of these weapons they cut themselves heavy clubs. And then they were ready.

The way to Thore's stead was downhill, and they had not walked a third of the distance when they heard again the hoarse, grumbling blasts of the ludr-horns, signaling the beaters into line. But this time they did not flee the horns, and presently Swain's keen eyes sighted a couple of fellows not unlike themselves, who dodged and scuttled in and out of the wood-growth.

As the newcomers panted up, the nearest of the pair turned upon them with a snarl.

"Let not one of Thore's house-carls see that you have been late," he bade them. "Quick, fools, into your places, beyond there on the right!"

Oddi nodded without speaking, caught Swain by the elbow and officiously steered him in the indicated direction. A moment later they sighted a second pair of the beaters and took their own stations midway betwixt the two pairs. Here they were when a breathless house-carl trotted by, wiping a sweating brow upon his jacket sleeve.

"Ho!" he exclaimed, stopping by Swain. "I have not seen you two before. Who are you?"

"I am Gubr of the Mark," answered Oddi readily, "and this is Gauka, my brother. We heard that Thore was paying well for men to help him entertain the Kings, and we——"

"As to the pay," grinned the house-carl, "give him cause to find fault with you, and it will take a form that will be painful."

He started off, then halted.

"What ails that brother of yours that he should goggle at me so? I am of a mind to loose an arrow into one eye to teach him——"

Oddi gave Swain a stinging slap on the cheek.

"Oh, don't mind him," he said. "He is a natural, but he has the strength of an ox, and can do any amount of work."

"That is different," grunted the house-carl. "Yes, he has a broad pair of shoulders. I will tell you what to do with him, Gubr. My name is Lodver, and my brother is Gorm the Fat, who is Thore's steward. After the beaters have been called in do you take your brother down to the skalli and we will put him to shifting ale-barrels. The Kings' men have bellies in their legs, and we are weary with serving them."

"All very well," replied Oddi with obvious craft. "But what of pay, Lodver?"

"Pay!" The house-carl snarled. "Who are you to talk to me of pay, carl? Do what I bid you or I will have you put up for the Kings' folk to shoot at."

"Men said that Thore was generous, and——"

"He is generous," rapped Lodver; "but the time to talk of payment is after service has been given."

The distant horns brayed again.

"The hunt is begun!" he exclaimed. "Off with you, and be sure the deer do not pass your line, else you will have to hear without ears hereafter. Off, I say!"

Oddi tweaked Swain by one ear.

"Off, fool!" he repeated. "Or you will lose what I only pinch."

"That is the way to treat him," approved Lodver. "And it might be said that you were not unlucky to have such a brother to work for you. Handle matters right, and you ought never to have to lift a hand. Well, well, I must be off."

He sounded his own horn and disappeared amongst the trees.

From time to time the horns brayed, near or far. Occasionally Swain or Oddi caught glimpses of the couples of beaters working to right or left of them. Twice they heard the crashing of branches as reindeer strove to escape the cordon and were turned back. Once a gray wolf, slavering tongue lolling over his white teeth, galloped past, fleeing the hunters. Another time they saw Lodver and a second of Thore's house-carls apparently forming a segment in an inner ring. Of the hunters for whom all this was being done they saw nothing.

And so the day waned until early afternoon, when the horns commenced to rumble and growl from end to end of a half-circle, and after a brief while a man shouted to them from the left that the hunt was ended and they were bidden to pass on the word toward the right wing.

"What now?" asked Oddi.

"Now we will try Thore's stead," answered Swain. "Has not Lodver prepared the way for us?"

Oddi looked doubtful.

"He would have us go into the skalli, and there——"

"We shall see those we have come to see, and perhaps hear what we have come to hear. I would not have it otherwise."

"A man is always wisest after the event," commented Oddi. "Well, brother fool, lead on."

"It is for you to lead," retorted Swain. "Likewise to be vigilant in your part."

The woods around them gradually spewed forth a train of varlets and thralls identical with themselves, all tramping with bent heads and sullen faces in the one direction.

"What is toward?" asked Oddi of the first they encountered. "Have the Kings killed all the game we drove for them?"

The fellow eyed him aslant.

"There was the one King hunting today," he answered. "And he broke off to return to meet his brother."

"Ho," said Oddi. "And which brother have we served, carl?"

"Sigurd today."

"Sigurd today," quoth Oddi. "And Sigurd and Eystein tomorrow."

He plucked at Swain's ear.

"Do you hear this, fool-brother? You are the servant of two Kings. One you have served, and the other you shall serve—but me you shall serve tonight. Yes, yes, it shall go ill if I do not come to a full meal by means of those muscles of yours."

"Is he witless?" asked the woodsman fearfully.

Oddi pecked at Swain's skull with the club he carried.

"Do you hear?" he said. "It rings hollow. Not a morsel inside, carl; as empty as a sucked egg."

The woodsman crossed himself.

"The Saints assoil us!" he exclaimed. "To have all the outward seeming of a man, and inwardly to be——"

"No more than a horse, carl," interrupted Oddi cheerfully. "Or, better, an ox. But I have already hired him out to work in Thore's skalli. Oh, he will do, he will do!"

Oddi cleverly saw to it that he and Swain became the center of a group of the beaters and serving-varlets, and when they passed the first outpost of house-carls on the edge of the vast clearing in which Thore's stead was situated no one so much as looked at the dirty pair, whose dirtiness was uniform with that which surrounded them. But in the stead yard stood several under-officers grouped about a man whose body was the bulk of two ordinary stout men, and as the beaters reached him he shouted directions which the under-officers executed, shoving men this way and that, some to the outhouses to do cleaning-work, some to the barns to tend the cattle, some to fetch in the meat from the hunt which others were dressing, some to the kitchens, some to stand by and bide whatever tasks should arise.

In this last division he placed Swain and Oddi; but Oddi refused to accept this judgment as final.

"If it please you—" he began.

"You do not please me, fellow," shrilled the fat man. "Stand aside."

"But I have a message for you."

"A message! You! From whom?"

"Lodver bade me say——"

"Oh, Lodver!" The fat man became more complaisant. "Well, what is it? Yes, it is all right, Hakon—" this to one of the under-officers—"let this little one stay, and shove that big brute——"

"But my message was concerning him, Gorm," protested Oddi. "He is my brother, and witless."

"Witless, my faith! Who would doubt it? I want naught to do with him."

"But Lodver said that I was to tell you Gauka might be employed to shift the ale-barrels in the skalli."

The fat man studied Swain's shambling figure.

"Ha, yes, I see! But witless——"

"I can make him do anything, Gorm. Tell me what you wish done, and I will set him to it."

"Ha, perhaps! Well, let me think—Humph! Yes, it will save us— Get you in there, carl! Bide in the anteroom until I call you. And see that you keep your fingers out of what is being served your betters or I will have them hewed off, one by one. Now, Hakon, these last can tend those of King Eystein's Guards we have lodged in the outlying farms. I must be off to the kitchens."

V

THORE'S skalli was an immense oblong structure with lower courses of stones to the height of a man's shoulder and above that built heavily of timber. Swain and Oddi turned their steps to the brandadyr (main door), and one of a dozen house-carls who lounged there dropped his spear across the threshold.

"The kvennadyr (lower door for women and servants) for you, thralls," he growled.

"We are no thralls, but free forest folk," retorted Oddi; "and it is by order of Gorm that we enter here, seeing that my brother is to shift the ale-barrels in the anteroom."

"Oh, in that case go on, and the —— curse you, fellow!" snapped the house-carl, and he gave them his back.

Inside the entrance was the long, dark, cluttered area of the anteroom, which, as in all skallis, was employed as a general lumber-room and hold-all. It was barer than usual, however, because the spare planks and stretches for the extra tables had been removed to provide seats for Thore's army of guests. But even so, its walls were stacked with old sails and arras awaiting mending at the women's hands, broken weapons, spare weapons, farming-tools, fishing-tackle and odds and ends of furniture which had been discarded from the living-quarters. At either extremity the ale-barrels towered, tier on tier, and likewise at several points against the outer wall.

The inner wall was pierced by a curtain-hung doorway giving upon the wainscoted passage which separated the hall from the sleeping-quarters and which ran entirely around the building. On either side of this doorway were racks for weapons and hooks for helms and shields, and these were all in use. Through the half-drawn curtain came the murmur of voices in the hall. The anteroom was empty.

Oddi nudged Swain.

"What's to do?" he whispered.

Swain pointed his finger at a helm by the inner door which was wrought in the shape of a bear's mask.

"We have seen that before; eh, Oddi?" he muttered, and his eyes flared red against the smut of his beard.

Oddi pursed his lips in a soundless whistle.

"Oh-ho! You say truly, fool-brother. Olvir Rosta wore that helm in Mikligard and after when we encountered him in Wineland on the Skraelings' coast. Well, we knew he would be here."

"Yes," said Swain, "and we will not forget it."

He crossed to the doorway and fingered the helm, tested the shield beneath it and the spear which was poised in a slot beside both.

"Humph!" he grunted. "It is good to know where Olvir leaves his gear. But you were asking what came next, little man. I think we should discover where the Kings amuse themselves."

Oddi shook his head.

"You speak as if two serving-varlets might stroll in wherever the pair sat and drink ale with them," he objected. "No, no, it is not so easy as that, Swain. So far fortune has smiled upon us, but we can not expect to continue at such a rate."

"We shall succeed to the limit of our abilities; no farther," rejoined Swain. "Be still."

And he applied his eye to the gap between the door-curtain and one of the posts.

"I can not see across the passage," he said. "Come, we must improve upon our luck."

"Bide, bide," urged Oddi, staring fearfully behind them. "If Gorm——"

"I am witless, and escaped you. Go, and be busy about those ale-barrels over there, and call for me if you see any one entering from without."

"If the shark is hungry, the shark must eat, the herring said," groaned Oddi. "I see that we shall not lack excitement, at any rate."

Nevertheless he took himself off as Swain directed, and pretended to be mysteriously busy over the ale-barrels stacked at the north end of the anteroom, and so soon as he was occupied Swain slipped through the curtain into the inner passage.

Arras lined the walls, flapping strangely in the drafts that circulated back and forth. To right and left the passage stretched without curve or break until it reached the rows of side pillars supporting the skalli's roof. Then it turned at right angles either way, the turn at each end illumined faintly by tiny windows high up in the side walls. From around each turn came a mutter of voices similar to that which drifted to him out of the great hall, this latter barred from him now only by another waving leathern curtain such as that he had passed in coming from the anteroom.

His first move Swain reckoned to be the inspection of the hall, and he tiptoed across the message and peered inside. Fires blazed the length of the central hearth, their smoke drifting up toward the roof vents. The candles and torches were not yet lighted, and the recesses of the huge room were dim and shadowy; but there was light enough for Swain to see the men who sat drinking at the high table against the south wall.

Olvir Rosta's swart, evil face and black brush of beard stood out amongst all the others. Swain's sword-hand clinched at sight of his enemy, but he refused to let his passions master him and pursued his cautious survey. Next to Olvir was another chief, whose tight mouth and pig-eyes identified him as Thore. The others were lendermen of one or the other faction, Sigurd's or Eystein's.

But of the Kings there was no sign. Of this Swain was sure, although he had never seen them, sure for two reasons: First, because the men at the high table yielded no special respect to any of their number; second, because he had often heard the two Kings described by Ingi, their brother, and Erling and others who knew them well.

Having determined so much, he was about to withdraw, when his attention was captured by a low-voiced conversation between two men who sat at the lower end of one of the long tables which straddled the hall parallel with the central hearths. All of the tables were occupied, more or less, by groups of men who were drinking, gambling or talking. The pair at Swain's elbow had just emptied their ale-horns and were on the point of rising. One of them was evidently a chieftain; his mail was silvered; his scarlet cloak was of rich Flemish stuff; his sword had a gold-wrought hilt. The other was a sturdy, heavy-featured carl, the type of under-officer.

"—never let the King out of your sight," the chief was saying. "Nor suffer one of Sigurd's folk to be alone with him."

"That is a sufficient task, Glum," grumbled the other; and by the name Swain knew the chief for Glum Raffi's son, one of the principal of King Eystein's lendermen. "Do you commit it to me alone?"

"No, no, you shall have help. But your watch begins now, and must continue until I have you relieved."

"What will the King say?"

"Eystein? Naught. This is by his order. As for Sigurd, that is not your concern, Blan."

"How our brothers love one another!" commented Blan. "One thing more. Do I bide at the door or walk in upon them?"

The chief reflected on the question.

"Bide at the door," he decided.

And then as an afterthought—

"Unless that ———," he jerked his head toward the high table, "prowls about."

"Olvir?"

"Never mind names, carl. Yes, I mean him. I would not trust him behind a closed door with our King for all the gold in the North."

Blan chuckled.

"He is the kind to make naught of Kings. Well, God send I do not have to cross blades with him."

"With him or with me, it is all the same," warned Glum. "If you fail at your duty, your death will be something men will debate for more years than you can hope to live."

"Hitty-titty," mouthed the house-carl. "Come fair, come foul, I am not likely to have luck. Well, I must make the best of it; only I pray you, Glum, do not leave the responsibility alone to me."

"You shall have your relief after candle-lighting," said Glum, and left him to walk up the hall to the high table.

Swain dodged behind a fold of the arras as the house-carl came out into the passage. The man turned to his right and walked briskly toward the south side of the house—which meant, Swain knew, that the Kings were lodged in that quarter. It was apparent, too, from what he had overheard that at that moment they were closeted together.

Swain waited in his hiding-place until Blan had turned the corner in the passage and was out of sight, then slipped back into the anteroom, where Oddi was fussing about the ale-casks, making pretense of having a task to attend to.

"This is our chance," whispered Swain. "The Kings are together, and I have the means to find them. Get me a pair of drinking-horns."

Oddi obeyed him dumbly, too surprized to ask questions, and Swain himself backed up against a barrel of ale, slung it dexterously upon one shoulder, gripped it firmly and extended his other hand for the horns which Oddi had selected from a heap upon a side table.

"But what will you do?" clamored the little scald, much disturbed. "And what shall I——"

"I go to serve the Kings. They are debating by themselves and will be thirsty, depend upon it. I——"

"But you are no skalli servant to wait upon Kings!" protested Oddi. "What will they say?"

"I will attend to that when the time comes. Now do you stay where you are, and if Gorm or any other comes you are to cry out that I have escaped you and you do not know what has become of me. Ease your heart, little man. This is a narrow corner, but we shall win free of it."

"Bah!" growled Oddi. "I am not afraid, but neither am I Swain. However, I am as good a liar as the next man, and if Gorm returns I will give him entertainment."

"No more shall I ask of you," responded Swain.

He poised the barrel more securely on his shoulder, pushed the curtain aside with the ale-horns he clutched in his free hand and walked swiftly in the direction Blan had taken.

By now his eyes were accustomed to the gloom of the skalli's inner parts and he had an accurate conception of the area of the passage and the amount of headroom it provided for the handling of his burden. He did not make a sound as he stole around the angle and discovered the corridor extending immediately behind the dais whereon were situated the sleeping-rooms ordinarily occupied by the master of the skalli and his family.

This corridor was better lighted than that between the anteroom and the hall, for the doors of several of the sleeping-rooms stood open and the glow of the sunset penetrated its shadows from their windows under the building's low-hung eaves. By one of these open doors stood the house-carl Blan, and as Swain approached the man he perceived that in the opposite—and inner—wall of the corridor was a second door, which he decided must yield admittance from the dais whereon was the high table. Probably it was concealed from the hall side by the arras which draped the paneling of that apartment's walls.

Blan saw Swain at the same moment and stepped forward with mouth agape.

"Ho, there!" exclaimed the house-carl. "Do you think this is the brew-house that you stagger along with your barrel? This passage is private to the Kings."

"I have ale for kings," muttered Swain sullenly.

"Ale for kings! God save us, fellow, you have ale for all our company. What do you here?"

"Kings must drink like common men," rejoined Swain, still sullenly.

The house-carl cast a wary eye over him, noting that he was weaponless, as well as the filthiness of his person and the bedraggled state of his apparel.

"Who are you?" demanded Blan. "One of Thore's folk? I never heard that a chief of his station must have cattle like you to wait in hall."

Swain abandoned his sullenness, and favored the house-carl with a stupid grin.

"Not every man can lift a barrel with Gauka," he said proudly.

"I believe you, Gauka—if that is your name," returned Blan. "But what I have yet to determine is why you come here with a barrel of ale for two drinkers."

"If you had kings for guests would you stint their ale?" countered Swain.

"Not I," affirmed Blan. "Although the blessed Saints preserve me from wasting any wealth I acquire in that direction. I am glad I am not Thore. Are you of his folk?"

"Gorm told Gauka to shift the ale-barrel," answered Swain with a renewal of his sullenness.

Blan tossed up his hands.

"If Gorm sent you, it must be all right. I am fresh come here today, and know none of your folk. Still, to send a half-wit like you to wait on kings! Oh, well, go in, go in, fool!"

A new idea popped into Swain's mind, and he contrived a cunning grimace over his unburdened shoulder as he turned to pass the open door.

"Gauka will not forget you, carl," he mumbled. "Get your ale-horn ready, for there is surely enough in this barrel to satisfy three men belly-deep, even though two of them be kings."

Blan stole a glance up and down the corridor's length.

"Why, there is merit in what you say," he declared. "Nor can it be said that you are entirely without wit. Can you understand me when I bid you not to allow any other to come into the Kings' chamber until I return?"

"Gauka is not to let any other man come in with him," repeated Swain stupidly.

"That is right," assented the house-carl. He grinned.

"But there will be sharp knives for you, my lad, if you turn back Olvir or Thore or some other chief," he muttered to himself as he sped around the turn in the passage. "Well, that is no concern of mine. If aught is said, my excuse is that I could not make out the fellow's purpose and went for orders."

Meanwhile Swain carried his ale-barrel into the room beyond the open door. It was empty, but another opened to his left hand and from it came two men's voices, one deliberate and cold, the other impetuous and hot.

"Ho, Kings," Swain murmured to himself. "Now we shall have a look at you."

VI

IN THIS room Swain entered was long and narrow, and one side of it was filled by a great lokrekkjur (shut-bed), the panel of which was slid back. Under the single window in the end wall was a table, upon which he deposited the ale-barrel, propping it in place with a helmet and shield which one of the Kings must have dropped there as he came in. A sword was hung on the back of the chair, which was the only other article of furniture in the room. A door in the partition wall to the left was ajar, and it was through this crack that the voices reached him from the room adjoining.

Swain moved with absolute stealth. He did not so much as permit the table to creak as he gently swung the ale-barrel down from his shoulder. In two breaths from the moment of Blan's departure he had tiptoed across the room, and had his ear to the aperture between door and doorpost.

"Ingi!" snorted the impetuous voice. "That niddering! Why, either one of us could drive him into the sea."

"Then why do you suggest——"

"It will be cheaper—and fairer—for us to do it together."

"I am not so sure of it," dripped the cool voice. "A few months ago, yes. But now he has a name for himself, and the folk say——"

"The folk say anything that they are bidden to say," snarled the other. "Bah, all because he raided a single skalli and slew a few men by dint of numbers!"

"He proved thereby he could fight, Sigurd," protested the cold voice.

"Ho!" said Swain to himself again. "So it is Sigurd who is for pricking on the hunt!"

"He proved naught," denied Sigurd. "If we come at him with a few hundred spears you will see him turn tail fast enough, yes, beg for life and his eyes."

"I am not so sure," persisted the cold voice—this must be Eystein, Swain reflected. "He has some notable chiefs about him, you must remember. There is Swain——"

"Swain!" King Sigurd threw inexpressible contempt into his voice. "That ragged-breeched viking-farer! He is no more than a sea-robber, putting from island to island after poor men's loot. I make small account of him, Eystein. Men tell tall tales of what he has done, but he never performed aught of moment in Norway that I ever heard of."

Swain ground his teeth with rage.

"Oh-ho!" he muttered. "Is that your opinion, King! It may be I shall have occasion to remind you of it."

Eystein made some movement in his seat, as if he felt impatience.

"Swain is a chief whom other chiefs follow," he said. "That is enough for me to know of him. But what is your plan? Do you purpose to slay Ingi or drive him from the land?"

"As to my plan, it is simple and therefore sure to work," returned Sigurd confidently. "We will send word to Ingi that the troubles which have beset the country make it necessary that we should hold a joint Thing of all our followers in the Spring; and in order that he may not be too suspicious of us we will appoint Bergen to be our place of meeting.

"He can not very well refuse us, for if he does men will accuse him of being responsible for the unsettled conditions that keep so many under arms and hinder trade.

Neither can he gather many more of his friends to him than ordinary, for if he did that we might both raise a complaint that he intended treachery, If we contrive matters aright I see no reason why we should not trap him. It is my thought that I should come to the Thing by land, while you sail up to the town in a fleet of longships. In that way we should have him between us, and escape in any direction would be cut off.

"As to slaying him, I am inclined to believe that we should do better if we simply disposed of the chief of his adherents and took from him all his possessions except a few farms. Then we could proclaim to the people that we had dispossessed him of his power for the common good and with all charity for him. That would shut the mouths of the priests, and——"

"Is this your thought?" Eystein interposed.

"Why—" for the first time Sigurd spoke with uncertainty— "I—Olvir and I have been at some pains to discuss it."

"It was the cleverness of the Foul Fiend himself!" exclaimed the other admiringly. "Well, so far, so good. Now what chiefs can you rely upon?"

Swain heard footsteps in the corridor and subdued voices in argument. And however he regretted it, he dared not listen longer. Darting across the room to the door opening on the corridor, he made certain that it was Blan and Oddi who approached, and stepped out to meet them.

"What said I?" declared Blan triumphantly, pointing at Swain with the ale-horn he held in his right hand. "Mad he may be, but as to his muscles——"

Despite the semidarkness of the passage, Swain could see the beaded sweat that was washing channels in the grime of the little scald's face.

"Yes, yes," answered Oddi hastily. "That is Glauka. The Saints only know what he has been up to. If he is told a thing——"

"How? How?" cried Blan, looking from one to the other. "Wasn't he sent as he said?"

"Oh, for all I know—" Oddi dashed the sweat from his eyes— "If Gorm——"

"If Gorm!" Blan stopped short. "Now I like this not. One says one thing, and one——"

Swain saw that it was time to act. Oddi was nigh frantic with uneasiness and becoming as witless as his chief had pretended to be.

"The King bids you in, Blan," said Swain.

"The King?" protested the house-carl. "Which King?"

Swain's face was in the dwindling shaft of light that came from the window of the vacant bed-chamber, and he managed to invest it with utter stupidity.

"The dark one." He permitted his voice to break in a cackle of meaningless laughter. "Heh-heh, he is nigh as black as I!"

"Swine! To compare yourself with the King!" growled Blan. "I'll have you whipped. But that would be Eystein, and I must not keep him waiting. Bide here, you two, until I——"

He made to pass Swain as he spoke, and Swain caught him by the neck with both hands. A wrench, a snap, and the house-carl's body hung limp in Swain's grip.

"Oh, blessed Olaf!" gasped Oddi. "You have slain him."

"You fool!" rapped Swain. "What else was there to do? Stay where you are."

He caught up Blan's body in his arms, and, treading lightly as ever, reentered the room from which he had eavesdropped upon the Kings. Their voices continued to drone through the inner door.

"— forty longships," Eystein was saying.

And Sigurd cut in:

"For my task? A couple of hundred stout carls——"

Swain thrust his burden into the lokrekkjur, and drew the panel shut, then turned and stole back into the corridor. Oddi, who had been watching him from the doorway, wiped his brow again with the back of one hand.

"All goes well, little man," said Swain. "Come, we have more slaying to do."

Oddi made an attempt to grin a cheerful assent.

"Oh, yes," he said. "Let us clean out the skalli!"

"Two more are all I ask," replied Swain.

They were walking swiftly, and had reached the corner of the corridor. Here Swain paused an instant and looked around it to see if any folk were in the section of the passage between the hall and the anteroom. It was as deserted as it had been.

"Has nobody been through since I left you?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. Several. They paid no attention to me."

"Going in or out?"

"Going in."

"Good!" Swain paused by the door to the anteroom. "You have not seen Gorm?"

"No, but I heard him without. He was called from the kitchens to settle some dispute as to where certain of Eystein's folk were to lodge."

"This is as well as it could be."

Swain drew the scald to the curtain veiling the doorway into the hall and studied the chiefs who sat at the high table. Yes, there was Olvir Rosta, almost in the center at Thore's left hand. And farther to the left, at the very end of the high table, Glum Raffi's son was gnawing a sheep's bone.

Swain pointed to the latter.

"Do you see him?" he said. "That is Glum Raffi's son, one of Eystein's lendermen. Blan, whom I just slew, was his man, and now I must slay Glum."

"This is a red day for you, Swain," quavered Oddi.

"Go you to Glum," said Swain, disregarding this remark, "and say to him that Blan requires him on the King's business. Do you understand?"

"Blan requires him on the King's business," repeated Oddi. "And then?"

"Why, then you follow him out, and be careful you do not exclaim or start if you trip on his corpse."

"This is one venture I shall be glad to see the end of," answered Oddi.

Nevertheless he put the curtain aside and slunk, varlet-fashion, through the shadows next to the wall of the hall, avoiding the tables where the house-carls sat. And Swain, without tarrying to observe him, slipped back into the anteroom. A glance assured him it was still empty, and he took Olvir's spear from the rack where it stood beside his enemy's helm and shield. He also recovered the clubs which he and Oddi had left against the wall, and slid shadow-wise into the corridor, ensconcing himself behind the arras close by the exit from the hall.

The clubs he clutched together in his left hand; the spear he held in his right, short up by the head, so that he could drive it home with a powerful stab.

He did not have long to wait. Footsteps sounded in the hall, and he heard Glum's voice, somewhat petulant in tone.

"By the Mass, but you are a stupid carl! Did he say no more?"

"I was coming by from the kitchens," cringed Oddi, "and he snapped his finger at me and——"

"Was any one with him?"

"No, lord, I can not say. I——"

They came into the passage, and Glum turned left. Oddi, with a wild look around him, dropped back as far as he dared. Swain waited until the lenderman had passed him a distance of two ells, then stepped out from the hangings and drove the spear through Glum's throat.

A bubbling grunt responded, and Glum's armor clashed as he swung impaled on the spear-head; but Swain leaned forward and gripped the dead man by the arm before he could fall.

"We do a thriving business," remarked Oddi. "Where will you have this one, Swain?"

"Where he is," said Swain curtly. "Take those clubs."

He disengaged the spear from Glum's neck and eased the body on to the floor.

"I did that too carefully," he commented "We must commit Olvir deeper."

Saying which, he thrust the spear into Glum's breast, making sure that it had penetrated armor, under-jerkin, clothing and flesh and was firm-bedded in the ribs.

"There!" he said. "The first man who happens by will not be able to tear that loose. And now for the next one."

"Will it be one of the Kings?" whispered Oddi as they hastened around the angle in the corridor.

"Not this night," retorted Swain grimly, "although it is in my mind that I shall yet be the bane of a foolish King. No, I am concerned now to crack open Olvir's head. Give me my club."

He speed along the corridor as far as the door which led to the dais in the hall, and which was almost opposite the door of the room from which he had spied upon the Kings. This last door he drew shut, having ascertained that Sigurd and Eystein were still comparing lists of followers.

"On watch, Oddi," he hissed. "If one man comes while I am within you must slay him or be slain. If more than one comes——"

He shrugged his shoulders and put his

hand to the dais door. The glare in his eyes flickered up like a flame in the wind.

"By the old gods!" he swore. "If I can slay Olvir now I care not what happens afterward."

"Why should I worry if the fleas drown, said the dog in the brook," quoth Oddi unhappily.

But the little man straddled the passage valiantly enough and balanced his club in his hand like the warrior he was in truth.

"Never fear for your back, Swain," he said. "But for the sake of letting me have the telling of this tale to crow over Armod, I beg you to make haste that we may escape."

"It is not words I am thinking of," rapped Swain, "but blows."

He drew the door to him cautiously and felt of the arras that overhung it on the dais side. These hangings were very thick and wrought with a pattern of figures. The voices of the men at the high table sifted through them with a kind of muffled distinctness, as if the speakers were farther away than was actually the case.

Swain held the door open only long enough to permit him to pass its threshold and find a lodgment behind the hangings; but the drafts from the open smoke-vents in the roof sent the stuffs bellying and surging with a rustle and sweep that helped to deaden the slight noise occasioned by the hinges. There was a stir at the table.

"Are the Kings returning? Is that you, lords?"

It was Olvir's voice, so close to his left that he felt a thrill from head to foot.

"No; we should have heard them speaking," answered some one Swain guessed to be Thore.

"But why did the hangings sway?" asked Olvir.

"Why do the boards creak?" returned a third man. "It is the wind."

Swain had been probing gently at the stuff in front of him for an eyehole, and at this point he found one, a worn spot where a mouse had eaten the threads thin. A slash of his thumbnail widened it sufficiently for him to see where Olvir sat.

He was directly behind Thore. Olvir, as has been said, sat on the host's left hand, and all Swain had to do was to spring clear of the encumbering arras and smash down his club on his enemy's skull.

Thore and the others were talking now of the incidents of the day's hunt; but Olvir sat silent, twisting his ale-horn in his fingers, as if in thought. Was he listening? Swain dared not wonder, dared not wait to ascertain. The very essence of the plan the Orkneyman had mapped out was the ruthless celerity with which it must be launched, the baffling anonymity of his attack.

THE LIFTED his club shoulder-high, as high as he could get it in those cramped quarters, swept the arras aside, reached out his arm and leveled a mighty blow at Olvir's head. No man saw him, no man heard him; his smutted features were indistinguishable in the twilight gloom against the dark pattern of the hangings. But some inner sense gave Olvir warning. The Roysterer turned his head ever so little, had a bare glimpse of the club descending and flung himself forward with arm upraised to shield himself.

Crunch! The club struck. Olvir groaned and slid beneath the table, his arm broken, his head terribly bruised. But the crunch came from the table-edge, which had taken most of the blow.

Men shouted and overturned chairs. Swords were out, daggers drawn. The house-carls at the long tables leaped for their arms.

"This way, Sigurd's men!"

"Eystein's folk together!"

Two separate parties formed quickly, and Thore's men hovered between the two, uncertain what to do. Then in the midst of the confusion came another uproar from the anteroom door.

"Glum is dead! Who slew Glum Raffi's son?"

Eystein's people gathered closer at this, and a howl of rage went up from their ranks.

"Out swords!" was their cry. "Sigurd has betrayed us!"

But Thore jumped to the top of the high table and beat down the clamor by dinning sword on shield.

"Down steel, all!" he shouted. "Olvir is hurt, too, and it may be slain. The man who did it has fled through the kitchens. Out, every one, and pursue him!"

They obeyed Thore for want of any definite appeal the other way; but the folk of the two factions held apart, and as they ran into the stead yard men talked to each other, tense, low-voiced, skeptical.

"Ho!" said Eystein's men. "Some one of Glum's friends has revenged him."

And Sigurd's men muttered amongst themselves—

"If Olvir was struck after Glum was slain there need be no doubt whence came the blow."

Later, when the spear in Glum's breast had been recognized as Olvir's, the chiefs were hard put to it to keep the two factions from each other's throats. And the end of it was that they must draw them apart, King Sigurd's folk on one side of the stead and King Eystein's on the other, and so they lay and debated the matter fruitlessly for a day and a night further.

Olvir denied that he had slain Glum, and indeed there was ample proof that he had not left the dais; but Eystein's folk said that that meant nothing, that one of Olvir's friends had done the deed. And for the man who had struck him, Olvir could say only that he had seen a dark arm, and other men in the hall spoke of a face like a fiend's that had appeared and disappeared, and the women and varlets in the kitchens and the rooms by the lower door of the skalli told of two smoke-blackened figures that had run through them into the night.

For reasons of their own Lodver and Gorm the Fat said nothing as to the two forest folk they had sent up to the skalli. Lodver suggested to his brother that the pair had been trolls, and that if anything became known of their share in the matter they would have the priests upon them, let alone Thore and the two Kings' folk—with which Gorm heartily agreed. And when Thore asked how the ale-barrel came in the room intended for King Eystein, Gorm swore that he and Lodver had set it there so the Kings might not have to call out if they were thirsty.

The finding of Blan's body in the shut-bed made the misunderstanding more difficult to settle. Only Glum had known why Blan was sent there. Eystein suspected, to be sure, but he was too cautious to say that he had bidden Glum station a guard to protect him against Sigurd.

And as for Sigurd and his folk, they hinted that Blan had been planning to slay Sigurd, and for such intent was made away with by one well disposed to that King. To which Eystein's folk retorted that it was more probable Blan, like his master, Glum, had been slain by Sigurd's men in the course of a plot to be rid of Eystein.

"Did you not tell me that you could conquer Ingi alone?" snarled Eystein. "I was a fool to heed you a moment. For your design was to push me from your path before you went against Ingi."

"There was naught foolish in what you did," bellowed Sigurd for answer. "Hiding an assassin in your bed to come at me as I slept, if the Saints had not been kind to me! Yes, and sending others to strike down my folk from behind the arras! Little good I have had of you, bastard that you are!"

"If I am a bastard, nonetheless am I a King," returned Eystein sourly. "And I have learned this of you: That I am better off if I play a lone hand."

"Play a lone hand, and lie in a lone grave," growled Sigurd.

And so they parted, and never came together again.

As for Swain and Oddi, they had profited by the confusion which followed upon Swain's blow at Olvir and the discovery of Glum's body immediately afterward. They had run past the door of the room in which the Kings were talking to the east end of the corridor, where it gave upon the women's quarters and the kitchens. Here there were no men capable of standing against such a pair, and they escaped into the open without difficulty.

In the stead yard it was a simple undertaking for them to sift through the swirling mob of house-carls, farm folk, varlets and forest men and gain the edge of the woodland. Whatever attempt was made by Thore's people to scour the countryside was but halfhearted, for the principal effort at the stead was to prevent the troops of the two Kings from attacking each other. The fugitives neither saw nor heard any trace of pursuit, regained the shelter where they had left their horses, washed themselves clean in the icy water, repaired their garments as well as they could and betook themselves to horse before the sun was up.

They reached Bergen in advance of any tidings of the result of their exploits, and by Swain's desire the full story of what they had accomplished was told to no more than a few of King Ingi's intimates, because, as Swain said, if it became known to Sigurd's and Eystein's folk how the quarrel had been brought about the two Kings might yet patch up peace. But as it was they were more bitter against each other than against Ingi.

"This is a great deed you have done, Swain," said King Ingi. "And here is a case where, albeit I may reward you with gold and silver, yet I am powerless to show you the honor which you have won."

"For the honor I have won," answered Swain, "I ask only that when Sigurd comes hither I have the handling of him. He is a king whom I intend to feel the weight of my hand."

"He is less to me than any thrall in the land," replied Ingi, "although men say he is my brother. Also, he is a loud talker, and requires humbling. I hope you may have the opportunity."

Then the King turned to Oddi the Little.

"But we have said nothing of rewarding the scald who shared Swain's perils," he said. "What will you have of me, Oddi?"

Oddi quirked up his face in a brown grimace of amusement.

"There is no reward for what I did," he said. "There is no reward big enough—as the candle sputtered after it was burned out. The truth is that I was so frightened I never knew where I was or what I was doing. Now and again Swain would slay a man, but I remember little else. It is like a dream after an ale-drinking."

And afterward when the tale became current gossip in Norway it was spoken of as Swain's Ale-Drinking. The point of this was that Swain never drank ale, and men laughed hugely at the notion.

VII

IT WAS not until the circumstances of the slayings in Thore's skalli were bruited through the land by the followers of Sigurd and Eystein that Swain knew his blow at Olvir had failed to kill the Roysterer. Men said that Olvir had gone into Sweden to a monastery of monks who were famed for their skill in healing broken bones, and there he rested the while his arm knit whole.

"It seems that after all I failed to accomplish what I set out to do," remarked Swain bitterly when this news reached him. "But I am not surprized, for Olvir's grandmother, Frakork, was a witch, and it is well known that she surrounded him with spells before I burned her."

"At least we shall not have Olvir to reckon with for the nonce," replied King Ingi.

"I shall not be satisfied so long as I have to reckon with him ever," said Swain. "He is an ill knave, and although we do not have him in person against us he has provided Sigurd with a pouch of tricks we shall do well to frustrate."

Indeed, Sigurd set to work to exploit those tricks without loss of time. There were rumors of many plots and projects from end to end of the land, but the first sure sign of what he intended came with the visit to Bergen of Halvard Gunnar's son, one of Sigurd's cupmates.

This was when Spring was well along. In the mean time Eystein had fared south on a viking cruise to the Flemish seas, telling all whom he met that he would have nothing to do with Sigurd—"and as for Ingi," he said, "if he gets in my way I will step on him; but for the present I have power enough for my wants."

Halvard was a glib-spoken fellow, very vain and noted for cruelty and bad temper. These were qualities he shared to some extent with his master, and folk said that Sigurd and Halvard got on well together for that reason. He came to Bergen with a small company and stopped at Unna's Tavern, where most of the lendermen lodged, and the next day waited upon King Ingi in full court.

"You are a stranger in these parts, Halvard," said Ingi after they had exchanged the customary greetings. "Do you come on your own account?"

"It is true that I have been a stranger here, lord King," responded Halvard with a sneer; "but it is not likely that I shall continue so, for your brother, King Sigurd, bade me come with a message notifying you of his purpose to pay you a visit."

Ingi's thin lips pressed tight together, and he exchanged glances with Swain, Erling, Gregorius and others of his chiefs.

"Is it so?" he replied politely. "I have seen little of my brothers in recent years."

"So said King Sigurd," rejoined Halvard. "He notifies you by me that he hears there is talk of ill-feeling toward him amongst those who serve you, and therefore——"

"The talk I have heard," objected Ingi, "is of ill-feeling toward me which he has expressed."

"Then you have heard lies, King," said

Halvard none too respectfully. "King Sigurd says by me that he holds you very dear and close to him, both because of the blood which you two share and because only in your loyal understanding can the country find peace."

"Good talk," said Ingi. "What goes with it?"

"Why, this. King Sigurd declares that the time has come to prove to all Norway that you and he are not at odds. Therefore he will come to Bergen, and you two shall hold a common Thing and set right whatever difficulties either one of you can raise now or has raised in the past."

"I will discuss your message with my counselors," said King Ingi. "You shall have my answer later."

"Now or later, it is all the same to me," returned Halvard, and swaggered from the hall.

When the King and his chiefs were alone considerable diversity of opinion developed as to how King Sigurd's suggestion should be treated.

"Depend upon it, Sigurd plans trouble for you, lord King," urged Erling. "You may not expect brotherly affection from that quarter."

"Nor any other," snapped the King. "You speak what every one knows already."

"Nevertheless, what he says is true," spoke up Gregorius hotly; "and my counsel is that you recognize the truth, muster an army and go against Sigurd without delay. He who strikes the first blow always gains the advantage."

"Yes, if he does not lose it thereby," amended Erling. "It is not my advice to seek trouble needlessly."

They wrangled all of the evening, and of those present Swain was the single one to hold his tongue. At last King Ingi turned to him in desperation.

"Here we have an equal division of opinion, Swain," he said. "Some of us would speak Sigurd fair and do naught to irritate him, albeit they say plainly that he cherishes evil toward us. Others, as you have heard, would go against him incontinent. What do you advise?"

"They are both right and both wrong," growled Swain. "Look you. King, this is what I had foreseen from the Winter day Oddi and I rode to Thor's. We have driven a wedge between Sigurd and Eystein; Eystein is already out of the country. That leaves you and Sigurd, for the time being, to contend for power. Sigurd is of a mind to lay you by the heels before Eystein returns. Then with your power and his own combined, he reckons to dispose of the bastard."

He paused.

"All true," affirmed Erling. "And as I said, it behooves us to walk warily."

"True indeed!" cried Gregorius. "But for that very reason we should attack Sigurd before he has completed his preparations."

"You are both right and both wrong," growled Swain a second time. "Walk warily, yes; but strike hard—and warily. To Erling I say we must prepare to meet treachery and force with treachery and force. I have no liking for treachery, but against treacherous foes you employ their own methods. To Gregorius I say we must hold our hand. Let Sigurd come. Watch him, see what he intends, lure him on. And if he will have it, crush him. But let the first move come from him. Thereby we shall not offend the priests and the merchants, who will be hostile to whichever faction they blame for starting war. And thereby also we shall have the opportunity of keeping our course under cover—and remember, that in fighting he who masks his intent the longest has the best chance of success."

"It requires you, Swain, to cut to the pith of the wood," said Ingi. "But how shall we prepare to check Sigurd? If we bid him into our midst do we not surrender our principal advantage?"

"We do," agreed Swain, "and so likewise does he. If both of you twain are in Bergen, you are both on an even footing. That is, he who is wilier and has the bravest and craftiest followers, all things else being equal, should win whatever bicker occurs."

"Hah!" cried Gregorius. "So you believe in a bicker, Swain?"

"I do," asserted Swain. "But mark me this. I would go to great lengths to put Sigurd in the wrong. Let him provoke us once and twice before we attempt aught against him."

"Yes, yes," approved Erling. "That is well reasoned. Swain has the right of it there. If we must fight, let us first put the enemy in the wrong. For it may be argued without questioning that no King of the three who wear crowns in Norway is strong enough today to master the whole country as matters stand."

Even Gregorius and the extremists who had sided with him—"berserks" they called themselves—agreed with this view now, and King Ingi turned to Swain again.

"What shall we say to Halvard?" he asked. "Is it wise to proffer too cordial an invitation?"

"Not so," answered Swain. "My counsel is that you tell Halvard that it is your great desire to be at peace with Sigurd, but that because of the feeling which has existed between your factions you deem it necessary to stipulate that he shall come to Bergen attended by no more than his personal following, you undertaking to observe the same condition."

"But will he assent?" protested the King. "And if he does, can we rely upon his word?"

"I am sure he will assent," said Swain, "and I am almost as sure that he will keep his word, because he professes entire contempt for you and your chiefs."

"But suppose his following is more numerous than ours?" interposed Erling.

"It will not be," replied Swain calmly. "We will take care to draw up every man we have reckoned as willing to serve King Ingi and keep the most of them aboardship or back in the country on the fjordside."

No chief had any criticism to make of this plan, and Ingi delivered Swain's answer to Halvard the next day. The envoy received it with a smile of scarcely concealed derision.

"I can promise all that you ask," he said scornfully, "seeing that King Sigurd is a king who does not find it necessary to make conditions as to how he shall receive guests or be received by others, and his following consists of warriors who are accustomed to reckoning themselves superior to all folk they may meet."

Saying which, he turned his back upon King Ingi and stalked from the hall. And men agreed that this was not a good omen for peace—but there was none who bewailed its occurrence in Bergen.

VIII

IN AFTER years men said that if Olvir Rosta had not been nursing a broken arm in a Swedish monastery King Sigurd would not have journeyed to Bergen with so small a company. For Olvir, as Swain and every other of his enemies agreed, was a most wise and crafty scoundrel. Such plans as Sigurd had ready for execution, Olvir had framed; but the King, unlike Olvir, was not clever enough to know when a good plan required changing or amendment or perhaps the substitution of another. Once he had set himself a course, Sigurd adhered to it. He had said publicly that Ingi was niddering, that the Cripple, as he called his brother, had no chiefs worth considering.

"What is Swain?" he would boast in terms similar to those Swain had overheard. "Naught but an island sea-robber, a wanderer, a man of no family. Wait until he meets the best warriors of Norway! You will hear folk singing another lay about him. Erling. He fears his shadow since he wed a princess, and fancies that whatever he does may jeopardize his chance to gain a throne that is safe out of the fool's reach, if he but knew it. Gregorius? A vaunting braggart. Let me at him, carls, and I will rip open his money-bags for you."

And Halvard Gunnar's son and the rest of his cupmates roared approval. They must, for Sigurd would not tolerate a man about him who attempted to resist his will. Nineteen years he had been King in Norway, and year by year his temper had become more ungovernable.

A few older lendermen counseled him against going to Bergen with a scant four hundred attendants in his train, but he scouted their fears.

"Why, with a score of my folk I would sweep Ingi and his rabble of outlanders and cupboard-chiefs into the fjord!" he cried. "Let him lift his head, and I will crack him on his hump with my sword-scabbard!"

But as it was, Sigurd came to Bergen in the week of the Feast of St. John the Baptist and took lodgings in the tavern of Sigrid Saeta between the strand and the Sand-Bridge, and those of his folk who could not find room in Sigrid's house were placed in other houses which were grouped all around the same yard. He bore himself very haughtily and dealt with the townfolk with a heavy hand, taking what he required and paying what he pleased—and sometimes nothing at all. And he was no less haughty and overbearing with his brother.

"What?" he said to Ingi the afternoon they met the first time. "Is it your wont now to wear helm and mail? I do not remember that you used to do so."

"I do many things that I was not accustomed to do of old," replied Ingi coldly.

"Take care lest you hurt that hump of yours," retorted Sigurd. "Well, have you learned to walk yet?"

Ingi stared down thoughtfully at his lame foot. A snarl swept the ranks of his own folk, but Swain and the other chiefs kept them in hand. Sigurd's people were grinning with pleasure at the spectacle of their King baiting his brother.

"No, I do not walk well," he answered. "But I can ride a horse. Did you come to Bergen to inquire after my ailments—brother?"

He threw such venom into that last word that Sigurd blinked amazedly. Sigurd was in every respect different from Ingi, a large, stout man, very brisk in his ways, fair-complexioned, with thick, light-brown hair and a handsome face, except for an ugly mouth.

"I came hither to set my heel upon certain lies which have been circulated about me," rejoined Sigurd after a moment.

"Then we can put off this conversation until the Thing trumpet sounds," said Ingi shortly.

And he rose without offering Sigurd and his folk more than the horn of ale they had first drunk. Sigurd frowned savagely, but he evidently had no wish to force an issue at this point and took himself off to carouse at Sigrid's.

IN THE morning Ingi caused it to be proclaimed that the Thing should be held upon a certain holm in the fjord close by the town, and the chiefs and their people went into longships and other vessels and rowed out to the holm, carrying with them provisions for an ample stay if it chanced that the discussions became unduly protracted, as they well might. Of course, by rigid prescription of Thing law all the folk of both factions, as well as those who were unattached in sympathy, were bound not to draw weapon at the Thingstead; but this was not to say that they should be weaponless.

On the contrary, it was a point of honor with each chief to see to it that his folk wore proper armor and that it was mended and well polished and also that every man was armed fitly. Ingi and his lendermen made great efforts to present a good appearance, and as a matter of fact they carried half again as many attendants to the Thing as did Sigurd; and what was more, their attendants were more richly clad and more completely armed and armored.

Ingi himself led six-score house-carls, all in crimson cloaks, while Swain, Gregorius and Erling each had upward of a hundred men with them and other chiefs supplied the remainder. The most splendid figure on the Thingstead was Gregorius Dag's son, who wore a gold-mounted helmet. He looked nobler than either of the Kings, for he was of tall stature and had a singularly lofty countenance.

When King Sigurd perceived the array of his brother's folk his lips curled in a sneer, and he stood forward of his followers' ranks and called out to Ingi:

"What, brother, have you armed your kitchen-varlets?"

"That is to be seen," replied Ingi impassively.

"It is well said that you may distinguish the warrior from the home-skulker by the blurs on his shield and the dints in his mail," continued Sigurd. "If it was your thought to put me to shame by outshining my array, know that I am a King accustomed to win my way in the field of battle; the ravens never lack for meat if I am by. And my folk have other things to think of than polishing their war-gear."

"This is not good talk for a peace Thing," answered King Ingi.

His folk were growling into their beards as they had growled the day before when Sigurd mocked Ingi in his own skalli. Sigurd's men were chuckling and laughing at his thrusts.

"Let us hew at them!" exclaimed Gregorius.

"No, no," expostulated Erling. "It would be fatal to our cause to lay upon ourselves the blame for breaking a Thing truce."

And Swain added a gruff assent.

"Speak him fair, King; speak him fair," said the Orkneyman. "Let him be, and he will talk away his cause."

Now, Sigurd had overheard what Gregorius had said, and he called out again with a pretense of fear:

"Ho, brother, you will not suffer that great chief in the gilded helm to strike me on the Thingstead?"

Sigurd's men laughed uproariously at this, as did many of the neutral observers, of whom there were a considerable number, townfolk and country folk, free and odal-born, who had equal voice with the Kings' immediate followings—or for that matter with the Kings themselves—in whatever proceedings were held.

"The first blow between us two shall never come from me or any man of mine," returned Ingi.

And the neutral folk left off laughing and cheered this statement.

"Is that a promise?" asked Sigurd swiftly.

"Upon oath if you wish," affirmed Ingi.

"I am much relieved," said Sigurd sarcastically. "But it was my understanding that we two did not come here for the making of such a pledge."

"No," answered Ingi. "We came here to settle the difficulties which exist between us."

"The only difficulties I have to contend with are lies told about me by my enemies," snarled Sigurd.

"That will be for the Thing to judge," said Ingi.

"Here is much talk, but little accomplished," responded Sigurd. "I have still to hear what you complain of."

"Then hear it," retorted Ingi. The crippled King's voice was edged with passion. "Men say that you and Eystein fell out at Thore's stead in the Uplands because of mutual treachery, but what you went there to plot between you was my downfall."

"Who says that lies," called Sigurd loudly.

"It will be interesting to see what weight your denial carries," said Ingi sarcastically. "You and Eystein sat in one of Thore's private chambers—exactly, it was the one next to that in which the body of a house-carl of Glum Raffi's son was found."

Sigurd could only stare at him stupidly, at a loss for words.

"Am I right?" barked Ingi.

"Why, many folk knew where I slept at Thore's, said Sigurd, regaining his composure. "What is there strange in that? Or in my talking with Eystein, seeing that we came together to——"

"Oh, the cause of your coming together was outwardly the adjustment of your differences—and much good did it do you!" exclaimed Ingi. "But the real cause was to concert how you two might divide my possessions."

"Some one has deceived you, brother," denied Sigurd gravely.

"Ho!" said Ingi. "Am I deceived then when I say, too, that Eystein asked you what disposition should be made of me, whether I should be slain or driven forth of the country? And am I deceived when I say that you replied that it would be better to dispose of the chief of my adherents and take from me all of my possessions except a couple of farms, so that it might not be claimed that I had been treated without charity? Am I deceived when I say that you told Eystein this would stop the mouths of the priests?"

"It is not true," gasped Sigurd.

"Perhaps it is also untrue," cried Ingi, "that when Eystein asked you if this plan was yours you answered that you had discussed it with Olvir Rosta?"

Sigurd crossed himself involuntarily. This was uncanny.

"All lies!" he exclaimed shakily. "You have——"

"Is it a lie that Eystein told you your plan—and Olvir's—had the cleverness of the Foul Fiend——"

"It is a lie, I say!" screamed Sigurd.

His face was white; his cheek-muscles work frantically.

"A lie, too, is it," pursued Ingi relentlessly, "that you told Eystein at the same time that the way to trap me would be to hold a joint Thing here at Bergen when you would come by land and Eystein by ship, so that I might be caught between you, with all hope of escape cut off?"

"By the blessed Saints——"

"Beware lest you blaspheme," warned Ingi. "Did not Eystein promise to bring forty longships, although you said that a few hundred spears would be enough?"

"You do well to quote Eystein in this," blustered Sigurd. "For I see his handiwork. It is like him to spread such falsehoods to cover his own purposes against you, as well as myself."

"I do not trust Eystein more than I do you," rejoined Ingi drily. "But I had naught of this from him. As a matter of fact, before you met Eystein you spoke in Winter quarters at Throndhjem of depriving me of my possessions and leaving me with wealth to maintain twenty or thirty men at most. 'For Ingi is unfitted by his ill-health to rule,' you said."

"More lies," roared Sigurd. "Except for that last. No man denies that it is a misfortune for the land that a cripple like you should be ruler. We who must fight the battles must therefor bear your proper share of the burden."

"Whoever told you that I would not bear my share of the burdens of Norway told you what was false," answered Ingi softly. "I cast it in his teeth. Show me an outland foe, and I will go against him, yes, with as many men as you, and I shall not be last in the fray. Show me a Norse foe who requires curbing, and I will go against him—although he be a King himself."

"Brave words," growled Sigurd. "Here has been much talk, Ingi, but little said."

"It is true that I have said the most," admitted Ingi. "What will you answer me further?"

Sigurd looked about him. His own folk had lowering faces, for they ill liked the way their leader had been chidden. Ingi's men, as was to be expected, were sternly exultant over the address he had shown. But what bothered Sigurd really was the dubious looks the neutrals bent upon him. In their hands rested the control of the Thing.

"Of what use is it for me to say more?" he shouted. "I have said that you repeated lies. I say it again, if necessary."

Then his eye chanced to fall upon Gregorius, who stood by King Ingi's side, grinning with delight at the way fortune had turned, and his temper burst into flame.

"And well I know who inspired you to accuse me in this fashion!" he exclaimed. "He knew that Eystein was viking-faring and that no man but he could have confirmed my words—if indeed, as I have said, it was not he who told you the falsehoods that have been repeated here. But I say this to you, Ingi: You do yourself no credit when you suffer a mock-warrior like Gregorius there—your ear-warmer, men might justly call him—to appear on the Thingstead with you and me in a golden helm such as is fit only for a king to wear."

"It is your's for the taking, King," shouted Gregorius before Ingi could reply.

"That is a rash offer," cried Sigurd, "for if I have my will you shall soon doff it."

"Not by your means," jeered Gregorius.

"Yes, by my means," retorted Sigurd. "For you will not be in a position to use head-covering after I have dealt with you."

Gregorius clapped his hand to his sword and started forward, and Sigurd and his folk likewise commenced to draw steel; but the neutral folk came in between the parties of the Kings, and after much clamor and reminders of the Thing law the opponents were induced to return to their places. When order had been restored King Ingi stood out again and spoke thus:

"It was your pleasure, brother, to reprove me for allowing Gregorius, who is one of my lendermen, to come to the Thing in a golden helm; and after that you threatened him with loss of his head."

"If I did, that is between him and me," rejoined Sigurd.

"Your attitude is not one that promises to lead to peace," said Ingi.

"Nor is yours one based on justice," retorted Sigurd.

"That is for the Thing to say."

"Oh, this Thing will say what you bid them say," snarled Sigurd. "And for that reason I will bide on the holm no longer."

With this he led his men away toward their boats; but before he had left, Ingi put the question to the Thing whether he had just cause for complaint against his brother and might expect the people to stand by him. The judgment of the Thing was in Ingi's favor, for Sigurd had prejudiced his case by his display of temper and his refusal to abide the judgment. But as is often the case in such affairs, the Thing, having delivered judgment, made haste to dissolve, and the most of the Thing folk returned to their homes, in no wise anxious to mingle in any fighting which might occur between the two Kings.

As Ingi and his chiefs rowed back up the fjord toward Bergen the waters were speckled with boats, rowing this way and that way, and along the shores might be seen parties of horsemen and footmen; but very few were heading for Bergen, and those few were merchants of the town, whose one wish was that there might be no fighting to imperil their trade.

"I fear that we have obtained a victory which leaves us no better off than we were before," said the King ruefully.

"We have simply put off what we have yet to accomplish," agreed Gregorius.

But Swain, who had kept his mouth shut since he had bidden King Ingi to speak his brother fair, growled dissent.

"We have done as well as we might," he said. "It is an old saying that Iceland was not colonized in a night. We did today what we set out to do. Sigurd lost his case before the Thing. All sober, sensible men will call him a hot-headed, dangerous fellow. He can rely upon none but his personal following to aid him."

Ingi pointed to the dispersal of the Thing folk.

"Can we reckon upon more to fight with us, Swain?"

"It is not the nature of men to fight unless they become convinced that it is to their interest to do so," answered Swain calmly. "Also, I do not think that we require any more men than we now have to render a good account of Sigurd when the time comes. Our principal task is to leave it to him to give us such provocation that no man will say we acted unjustly by him when we finally punish him."

IX

THAT afternoon and evening there were several brawls in the town between bands of house-carls of the two Kings' followings, but the chiefs succeeded in quelling each disturbance before blood was drawn. Yet in the morning one of Gregorius' men was found dead by the Sand-Bridge, and albeit there was naught to reveal how he came by his hurt all of King Ingi's faction denounced the deed as done by Sigurd's folk.

"Now who shall say that we have not awaited just provocation?" cried Gregorius. "This man was alone, and his sword was in its sheath. He must have been slain by surprize, and there are footprints around his body to prove that more than one had a hand in it."

Erling wagged his head in a stiff way he had by reason of the crick in his neck.

"However just be Gregorius' rage," he said, "let us rather permit Sigurd to be first to draw the sword in public rather than take upon ourselves the responsibility of bringing about an open breach between the Kings."

"It is easy for you to give such advice!" exclaimed Gregorius. "But I call upon all here to recognize that the slain man had a claim upon me for protection, and I shall be deprived of the respect of honorable men if I do not exact reparation for his death."

Other chiefs spoke up in support of Gregorius, for indeed feeling had waxed very hot overnight, what with the recollection of the way King Sigurd had swaggered and blustered at the holm Thing, the broils in the town, and finally this slaying of a single man, obviously, as Gregorius had claimed, by a band whose numbers had rendered it impossible for him to offer any defense. And it was to be seen that Erling was in a minority.

King Ingi listened to all that was said, rubbing his chin reflectively for a time after the last had spoken, and then as usual he turned to Swain, who sat silent and aloof.

"What is your opinion, Swain?" he inquired.

"It is not yet time for us to strike," returned Swain.

And Erling echoed him eagerly.

"Yes, yes; Swain speaks common sense, Lord King. Why should we risk offending——"

But Gregorius started up from his chair, flushed with anger.

"By Olaf's bones," he swore, "is it you, Swain, who will deliver such a tame judgment and suffer shame to be put upon me, who have been——"

Swain held up his hand, and the lenderman fell silent.

"I would not suffer shame to be put upon you," said Swain. "The King has asked me——"

"Not put shame upon me! Ho, what else is it? One of my house-carls slain like a dog in the gutter, and no man-bote——"

"I said nothing against securing man-bote," interrupted Swain. "If the King is willing I will go this moment to Sigurd and demand the punishment of your man's slayer and the awarding of heavy man-bote for the crime."

Gregorius sat down again, nonplused, and Erling started to argue in defense of Swain's proposal.

"This plan of Swain's provides an honorable means of keeping peace," began the Wrynecked, "and of securing justice to Gregorius, who——"

"Bah!" protested Gregorius. "Do you suppose for an instant that Sigurd will consent to pay man-bote?"

"Not I," agreed Swain.

"Or punish a man we can not identify?"

"No," agreed Swain again.

"Then of what use is your plan?"

"If I have read Sigurd's mind aright it will tempt him to some further indiscretion," answered Swain. "And it will likewise serve to convince all the townfolk that we of King Ingi's following are loath to break the peace."

"That is good counsel," indorsed Erling.

And many others spoke to similar effect, until at length only a few chiefs clung to Gregorius.

"It is plain that you are all not with me in this matter," said Gregorius then; "and I am not one to cause trouble unnecessarily, although it is true that so far I am the sufferer by the policy we have adopted. But I hope that you will not make a virtue of accepting more slights at Sigurd's hands, for you may be sure that when he discovers we accept so tamely this slaying he will not be slow to heap greater indignities upon us."

"That is a stream we will ford when we come to it," replied Swain. "Well, King, what is your pleasure?"

"I will have you go to Sigurd, as you suggest, Swain," responded Ingi. "But do you not fear to go to him on such an errand alone?"

"I never yet feared to face any man alone," said Swain. "Moreover, if I took a company with me we should surely come to blows. Let me contrive matters in my own fashion, and all will be well."

They agreed to this, and at Erling's suggestion King Ingi issued an order that all the folk of his faction should bide in their several quarters and not stir abroad when it could be helped.

So Swain wrapped his cloak around him, and sallied forth from King Ingi's skalli to walk to Sigrid Saeta's house on the opposite side of the town. He wore his mail and had his helm on his head and his sword at his side, but he left spear and shield behind him.

Half-way on his errand, just across the Sand-Bridge, he encountered a party of Sigurd's house-carls who were very drunk. They surged around him, pawing at his cloak and jeering vilely.

"Are you coming over to our King, Orkneyman?" shouted one.

"Ho, here is more gutter-meat!" cried a second.

"That is too fine a sword for a sea-robber," said a third, reaching for the weapon's hilt.

Swain put his own hand upon the sword and swept the circle of leering faces with his hard blue eyes that contained in their depths an icy fire which shriveled the gibes on their lips.

"I go to King Sigurd," he said coldly. "To heel, curs."

The boldest scowled and there were muttered threats of vengeance; but they withdrew from his path, and he went on undisturbed, half a dozen couriers running ahead to fetch word of his coming to their master.

Sigurd sat at the ale-drinking in Sigrid Saeta's hall, and with him were his particular cronies, Halvard Gunnar's son, Grim Trafale's son, Einar Laxapaul's son and Thord Husfreyja from Viken. When Swain entered the hall they pretended not to take note of him, and continued singing and telling jests and reciting experiences; but Swain walked straight up the hall to where the King sat.

"I have a message for you, King," he said.

"And who are you?" replied Sigurd, although he knew well who Swain was.

"I am Swain."

"Swain? That is a common name. Where are you from? Who was your father?"

Swain bent upon him the full power of his frosty eyes, and he kept them focused on Sigurd's face until the King looked away.

"Who I am you know," he said. "I have been called Jarlmaker in the Orkneys, where I dwell by times when I am not playing with kings."

"Ho!" snarled Sigurd, fighting free of the spell of the Orkneyman's will. "So you play with kings! It may be, Swain Kingplayer, that——"

"I shall not be called Kingplayer," interposed Swain.

"No?" sneered the King. "Have you selected a title?"

"It is in my mind that men shall yet hail me as Kingsbane," answered Swain.

Now Sigurd leaped up with his sword bared, and his folk bustled forward from all sides to surround Swain; but of those at the high table Thord Husfreyja caught the King's arm and pulled him back into his seat.

"Bethink you, lord King!" cried Thord, "Swain is one man amongst many here and moreover comes to you on an errand. It will avail us little in what we seek to slay him so."

"No man shall taunt me to my face as Swain as done, and live," roared King Sigurd.

"It is to be said that if Swain taunted you, nonetheless did you beard him in such a way as required sharp talk from an honorable man of Swain's reputation," insisted Thord.

Thord's speech persuaded others to his way of thinking—those of the elder and more serious-minded of the King's court men, some of whom were much disturbed by his wild ways and evident intent to force a conflict with his brother—and a group of them gathered between Swain and the King, and in the end finally prevailed upon Sigurd to hear Swain's message.

"So be it," said Sigurd, his ugly mouth working with rage. "As a messenger, indeed, it is true that you are privileged, Swain; but be sure you do not cross my path again."

"I am content to leave my fortune to the future," replied Swain. "It is a proved saying that threatened men dull many sword-blades."

The King gritted his teeth and tossed off a horn of ale.

"Your message," he growled thickly.

"King Ingi says by me," began Swain, "that he is surprized to learn that one of the house-carls of Gregorius Dag's son was slain by the Sand-Bridge last night."

"By whom?" barked the King.

"That is not to be proven, save that he had no enemies amongst King Ingi's following, and your folk made frequent threats in the streets that——"

"But you yourself have said that threatened men dull many sword-blades," sneered Sigurd.

"Did your men not slay him?" demanded Swain.

"That is not for me to say, but for you to prove."

"All fair-minded men will agree with me," returned Swain, "when I say that after the way you and your folk have conducted themselves it can not be questioned that the slaying was the work of your party."

"And if it was?" asked the King, grinning sourly.

"King Ingi will leave the punishment of the slayer in your hands and agree to the appointment of a neutral person who shall weigh the offense and judge the man-bote to be due."

Sigurd started up a second time, his features distorted into a horrid mask. All his good looks were gone. A dank sweat burst out upon his brow. His eyes popped in their sockets. His hair straggled in elf-locks over his face.

"By ——, shall that crippled swine of a brother of mine talk to me of man-bote for any slaying, proven or unproven?" he bellowed. "It passes bearing. Get you forth of here, Swain Kingplayer. You have played with kings for the last time in my presence. When next we meet I will have you taken alive and try if my house-carls can not show that your reputation has been overestimated."

Swain eyed the enraged king slowly from head to foot.

"That is not my way, King," he answered. "My enemies I slay."

He turned on his heel and strode from the skalli before any could reply.

"Curse him for a thief!" gasped Sigurd as Swain disappeared into the yard.

"No, no, lord King," remonstrated Thord Husfreyja, "Swain is not to be lightly estimated. He is a dangerous enemy."

"Oh, Swain has won his reputation in fighting with other small chiefs!" exclaimed Halvard Gunnar's son. "He will be a pricked bubble when we tempt him to clash steel with us."

Sigurd responded readily to such repetition of his own assertions.

"Halvard has the right of it," he said haughtily. "Norway is not to be disturbed by an Orkney bondi (farmer)."

And he and his men fell to talking of what they should do next to harry Ingi's folk and help to make the crippled King a fit subject for jest and disrespect throughout the country—for this was their purpose.

X

BY DINT of keeping his men in their quarters and moving them about as little as possible King Ingi avoided any further brawling for the space of several days, and in order to be offensive Sigurd was driven to the extreme of coming with a tail of house-carls and drunken chiefs to howl in front of his brother's skalli or the other lodging-places of Ingi's friends. But the consequence of these measures was that

Ingi's men became very sore and wroth, and it is beyond question that if Sigurd had not provided their leader with an opportunity to abandon his defensive attitude they would soon have taken the situation into their own hands. Only Swain's influence restrained them so long as was necessary in the circumstances.

The break came in this wise: Some three days after Swain's visit to King Sigurd an old court man, who had served not only King Ingi but his father—who was also Sigurd's father—King Harald Gillichrist, King Magnus the Blind and King Sigurd the Crusader, went forth of Ingi's skalli to vespers, the day being a Friday. This old court man's name was Sigurd Skrudhyrna, and it never occurred to any of King Ingi's folk that so ancient a man could be in danger because of the feud between the Kings. Therefore no man advised against his going to church.

But as the church folk were coming home after the service Halvard Gunnar's son and other of King Sigurd's men came upon old Sigurd and slew him without mercy, making a jest of the deed. They left his body in the street, and there it was found by Queen Ingerid, King Ingi's mother, and the townsfolk who had witnessed the court man's murder told her how it had happened and who had done it.

The Queen sent hastily to apprise Gregorius, and then she herself went to her son's skalli, where Ingi was sitting in very gloomy mood, out of all conceit with himself, with Swain, Erling and a dozen more of his chiefs about him.

Ingi looked up in surprize as his mother entered the hall, for they were not the best of friends. Ingerid was noted as a shrew and for her hatred of her dead husband's sons by other women—this last feeling being almost the only tie which bound her to her own son.

"It is no pleasure to a mother," she commenced without preface, "to hear that the son she conceived and bore is said to have succumbed to his physical ailments."

"Why, what is this?" replied Ingi, astonished. "Do you rave——"

"I say to you plainly that you will be but a little king, and that of no account, if you suffer your people to be killed, the one after the other, like swine," she declared.

"I do not understand you, mother," said Ingi.

And Swain, who had small use for any woman and a curt way with them at best, called roughly to her:

"Talk sense, Queen! What moves you to such uncivil words?"

"I have just come from the bloody corpse of Sigurd Skrudhyrna, who served your father before you, Ingi," she answered them both; "yes, and other kings before that. And it was commonly said in the street that Halvard Gunnar's son had slain him."

"This is a bad slight which has been put upon me," said Ingi heavily. "You do well to upbraid me, mother.

"We must take thought to what we do! What do you advise, Swain?"

But before Swain could answer, Gregorius tramped into the hall, fully mailed.

"Ho, King!" he shouted. "I am come hither to your assistance with five-score men. We have seen old Sigurd Skrudhyrna's gray hairs afloat in the blood-pool in the gutter, and we will attack those who wrought such a deed and take our station where the danger is greatest."

Erling and several more protested that this was no way to decide so important a question, but Gregorius cut them short with another shout:

"Listen to these fellows, King, and you will frighten your men from you. For first Sigurd slew my house-carl; now he has slain your court man, and next he will undertake to slay me or Erling or some other of your lendermen. And thereafterward he will gradually drive all men from you until you will be left alone and unprotected, and your choice will be between a monastery and exile, if indeed he does not decide to slay you in the excess of his power."

Erling and his supporters shouted renewed objections to Gregorius' proposals, and the old Queen stood rigidly in the midst of the uproar scowling upon all. So vigorous became the debate that presently she and Swain were the only two in the hall who were not clamoring for one course or the other; and King Ingi, perceiving this, beat upon the table with his sword to quell the noise.

"Peace!" he commanded when at last he had men's ears. "You defeat yourselves by your babbling. Here is no matter for quips and arguments. It is yes or no. How say you, Swain?"

Both sides regarded Swain uncertainly, wondering which way he would decide.

"Will you leave this to one man's decision?" fumed the Queen.

"If the man be Swain, yes," retorted the King. "Well, Swain?"

"Strike," answered Swain.

"What!" exclaimed Erling, disappointed. "Will you shift your stand, Swain, and cast in with these hotheads?"

"I say what I have always said," returned Swain steadily. "Our policy was to withhold our hands until to do so longer would work to our disadvantage. That moment has come. If we do not strike now men will say we are niddering. If we do strike now no man will say we were unjustified."

"Queen Ingerid tossed her gray head.

"Hutatut!" she said. "There is at least one man in Norway. Out swords, carls, and sweep Sigurd's rabble into the fjord."

The scalds Armod and Oddi burst into the measured cadence of the Glumdrapa and two hundred men took up the burden, beating time with swords and spears. Two sturdy house-carls lifted King Ingi upon a shield which they poised shoulder-high, and with him in the van, the chiefs led the folk forth from the skalli.

Only the old Queen remained behind.

"Shall brother slay brother?" she muttered balefully. "Let him! For of what use is a throne if two kings shove back and forth across it, with a bastard biding his time to creep in between them and possess it for himself? And it befits no man, king or common, to live in dishonor."

When all was quiet in the skalli she crept out after the warriors. Afar she heard the racket of fighting, fierce shouts, the clatter of steel. But she took her way toward the church, past where Sigurd Skrudhyrna's body still lay in its gore. Into the church she went, and sought her knees, and so she leaves this story, flickering faintly into view like the gray wraith of a Valkyr, screaming her brief pean of hate and fading as the war-clouds redden, fading, fading into the slow Northern twilight.

XI

THESE events occurred in the early part of Summer when the days were at their longest, and so despite the fact that vespers were past there was yet sufficient light to see by. King Ingi's chiefs dispatched messengers through the town, bidding all their folk to arm, and they appointed the rallying-spot to be the smithy shops on the road above the strand. Hither came upward of five hundred men; the remainder were not reached until after the onfall began. And as it chanced, Sigurd's men were all under cover at this hour, having returned to their lodgings in the houses surrounding the yard whereon stood Sigrid Saeta's house to eat the evening meal. The first they knew of the attack was when the shouts of Ingi's bands dinned into their ears and the arrows commenced to whistle in the windows.

In front of the smithy shops Ingi and his chiefs took final counsel on their plans, and it was decided that the King and his court men and Guards, with several of the lesser barons who attended his banner, should continue on this road, while Erling, Arne, the King's brother-in-law and Aslak Erlend's son conducted their bands over the Sand-Bridge. Swain and Gregorius, who had the most men, elected to follow the road which led to the gate of Sigrid Saeta's house, where the assault should be worst. In this way they cast a cordon around King Sigurd's position.

Sigurd was at table when the word reached him that Ingi at last had turned upon him, and it is reported that he exclaimed his satisfaction.

"The pricked swine gnashes its tusks!" he said.

But his satisfaction was soon turned to dismay, for the assault was launched so promptly and with such relentless pressure that his folk had no opportunity to get out of their lodgings and meet it in the open. Even then, however, Sigurd refused to believe that there was any danger to him.

"The fools hunger for death," he said. "Well, if they prefer us to remain under cover let us take advantage of the opportunity."

And he led a considerable number of men up into the loft of Sigrid Saeta's house and sent word to his folk in the adjoining houses to do likewise. In the lofts they made holes through the roofs, and from these places shot arrows at King Ingi's men and after their store of shafts became low tore stones from a fireplace and cast these at the attackers.

But King Ingi's party were not to be daunted by such long-range resistance, and they pressed on from every side, especially Swain and Gregorius, whose followers were accustomed to fighting in company. They hacked down the gates to the yard of Sigrid Saeta's house, and in an effort to stop their progress King Sigurd came down from the loft and collected a body of men to aid him to hold the gate.

In the mean time Erling and his folk were smashing their way into the other lodgings of King Sigurd's faction, and so stern was their advance and so fearless that presently those of Sigurd's men who were separated from him lost heart in the struggle and cried for peace. Erling bore himself very bravely, and it was afterward said of him that no man put himself to greater risk or was more forward in battle, which was remembered whenever he urged moderation in action.

King Ingi took his stand in the street behind where Swain and Gregorius were attacking the gateway of Sigrid Saeta's house; his guards were in the rear of the house to prevent King Sigurd's escape by the back entrance, and he himself would have limped up and joined the fray by the gate if his court men had not detained him. As it was, he insisted upon remaining exposed to the arrow-hail.

"It is a poor king who will not trust to his mail," he said.

Nor would he suffer that the court men should hold shields over him.

And now there was a lull in the fighting, for all those engaged upon both sides perceived that the result must depend upon whether or not King Sigurd could hold his own at the gate. Of his men fully half had been slain or captured, and those who were left to him were concerned, first to hurl back the attack which Swain and Gregorius were about to renew, and after that to devise a means of thrusting their way through the encircling cordon at its weakest point.

The folk in the opposing bands arrayed their ranks in this interval. King Sigurd and his chiefs and the stoutest of his housecarls formed a shield-wall in the gateway which his brother's axmen had destroyed. Swain and Gregorius formed an opposing shield-wall, or rather a column, ten men wide in the front and twenty in depth; and when they were ready they marched into the gateway, silent, except for the trampling of feet and the clash of armor.

"Ho, ho!" laughed King Sigurd, glimpsing Swain and Gregorius side by side. "Kingplayer and Golden Helm come at me together! I have already predicted the fates which await you two, and we will endeavor to uphold my prowess as a forelooker."

Gregorius would have shouted an answer, but Swain growled in the lenderman's ear:

"Waste no breath! Steel is the best argument."

The two shield-walls crashed in the bitterest slaughter of the day. Men toppled on both sides, and the crunching of the axes, the keen, whuttering *pluck!* of the swords shearing flesh and bone, the rasping of crossed blades, the hissing of arrows and stabbing of spears, the panting of the fighters, the groans of the wounded, the cries of the slayers, all joined in such a clamor as seemed to arrest the onward march of night.

All through the town the folk called from house to house:

"Here are many poor souls in agony. It is a sorry business when kings fall out."

Most of the front rank of the attackers were hewn down; but others stepped up to fill the vacancies, and no blows might stay the two chiefs, Swain and Gregorius. So that presently King Sigurd's line bent inward, and the next any man knew it had flown apart like a piece of wood that splinters and the King's folk were running in every direction, Sigurd not the hindmost.

He and a handful more gained the protection of the house; but Swain and Gregorius wrought a dire harvest in the yard; and there fell Einar Laxapaul's son, Halvard Gunnar's son—and no man wept for *him*—and a score of others of Sigurd's cronies and cupmates. The blood was in pools and runnels, and the attackers could not pass except over corpses.

Sigurd bore a gilded shield; and after he had regained the house he came to a window in the loft and pushed this shield in front of him and shouted that he would have speech with his brother.

"What would you say to Ingi?" Gregorius shouted back.

"Why, look you," rejoined Sigurd, "it is foolish for us to be slaying each other when——"

A great laugh from all of King Ingi's folk within hearing was his answer. And when he would have spoken further they shot arrows at him as thick as flakes in a snow-shower, and he was driven from the window.

Of the men who had reentered the house

with him all except one, Thord Husfreyja—he who had spoken in Swain's behalf when King Sigurd would have slain him the day Swain came to demand man-bote for the murder of Gregorius' house-carl—called from the lower door that they had no mind to fight any longer if they might have peace. Swain and Gregorius consulted on this, and replied that they might come forth, but that if any offense was later proved against any one of their number that man should be punished however the crime required. Sigurd's men said that they were satisfied with these terms and filed out weaponless.

"We have made a great slaughter, Swain," quoth Gregorius, wiping the sweat from his brow; "but we have fought to little purpose if Sigurd escapes us."

"True talk," assented Swain. "Are you of a mind to take Sigurd's gilt shield to carry when you wear that helm which offended him?"

"I would lose the price of two farms for it," returned Gregorius. "What will you do?"

"Ho, carls!" Swain called to a group of his own Orkneymen, hardened viking-farers who had voyaged with him from world's end to world's end. "Fetch us fire."

The word was carried along the street that Swain was about to burn Sigrid Saeta's house, and a number of merchants came out of their dwellings and besought King Ingi to stop him.

"For," they said, "if one house is kindled it may be the whole town will burn—and we are not responsible for King Sigurd's offenses."

"If Swain will burn it, Swain will burn it," replied King Ingi. "But I will——"

BEFORE he could finish his speech there arose a great outcry in the yard of Sigrid's house, and the word came that King Sigurd was coming forth. He had seen men bringing up torches, and was of no mind to die in the flames. So he and Thord Husfreyja ran from the door with their shields dressed and put aside or avoided several blows which were aimed at them. They reached the gateway with its windrows of dead, and King Sigurd called to the men who barred his path:

"Stand aside, carls! I go to ask peace of my brother. Hold your blades. There is no blood between us."

The common men were dazed by this sudden turn; none of them liked to slay the King when he asked peace, for it is an ill thing for a common man to slay a king; and Gregorius and Swain were elsewhere in the yard, directing the preparations to set fire to the house. But Swain saw the swirl by the gateway and knew it was the King by the glitter of the gilded shield which caught the glow of the sunset and marked Sigurd's progress; and he dropped what he was doing and ran thither, forcing his way through the ranks of the house-carls.

"Hold Sigurd!" he shouted. "Stop him, fools!"

Whatever faults he had, Sigurd was no coward; and he struck out with the edge, and Thord with him, when he understood that Swain would prevent his reaching Ingi. They had slain two men and maimed a third before Swain stood in front of them, and the encircling ranks yielded ground, the weary house-carls vastly relieved that a chief had appeared to assume the responsibility for what befell.

"What? Only two of you?" said Swain. "Humph! I would not have a king worried to his death like a hare coursed by dogs. Stand back, carls! I will attend to Sigurd myself. I have a score to settle with him. As for Thord, he is a brave fellow, and we will give him peace."

But Thord gripped his sword tighter and shook his head.

"I want no peace that is refused my King, Swain," he answered.

"Ho!" exclaimed Swain. "It shall be said of you that you were a man of great honor, Thord. I am sorry, but——"

And he struck so swiftly that no man saw his blade in air. The steel sang, and Thord's head sprang up from the neck.

"He was a better man than his master," commented Swain. "Now, Sigurd, let us prove that title I am to have from this day's work."

The King snarled a curse and leaped to meet him. Sword rang on sword. Swain retreated.

"I can not spoil that shield of yours," he jeered, "for Gregorius will have it to go with his golden helm. You remember, King? That which he wore on the Thing stead. You said——"

"God's curse on you!" panted Sigurd, smiting like a smith at the anvil. "If I die, yet will I——"

"What? Cripple me? Never! Why, you could not so much as harm a crippled king, let alone a whole chief. Bah, Sigurd, your race is run."

Sigurd drew back an instant to regain his breath.

"Ho, Ingi!" he shouted. "Give me——"

"It is of no avail," interrupted Swain, hewing at him again. "Ingi is finished with you. And so am I!"

Sigurd stooped to fend a slash at his legs, and while he was off guard Swain dealt him a back-hand blow on the helm that sheared through the steel deep into the brain. The king tottered, swaying to and fro, and then collapsed in a heap at Swain's feet as Gregorius burst into the ring of house-carls, face aflame.

"Swain, Swain!" he cried, "Sigurd is escaped!"

"And there he lies." Swain pointed his dripping blade. "I have not dented your new shield."

"Is he dead?" asked Gregorius, and a tone of awe crept into his voice.

It was not every day a king was slain, even in turbulent Norway.

"Unless Olvir Rosta or some other warlock can contrive to put back the brains in his skull," answered Swain. "He called me Kingplayer. Humph! It is in my mind that men will be more likely to dub me Kingsbane. A sea-robber, he said I was! And a fighter of small chiefs! Well, I am content."

And from that day whenever men in Norway spoke of those deeds and of Swain's share in them they referred to him as Swain Kingsbane.

"He will be a bold king who crosses the Orkneyman," they said.

But when the news of Swain's deed reached the Orkneys the folk only chuckled.

"We knew what Swain thought of jarls," they said. "It is not strange that he thinks less of kings."

XII

KING INGI gave Swain much honor for slaying King Sigurd. He promised bountiful rewards to all his chiefs, but to Swain he promised most.

"Not many of you would have dared to face Sigurd and slay him publicly," he said. "But it was the one thing to do. If Sigurd had escaped he would have been so embittered by this defeat that he would never have rested until he had taken vengeance for it upon all who had any hand in it. We may all thank Swain for slaying him."

And he said, also:

"Now I shall be truly a king, and those who remain my friends will never have cause to regret it."

But Swain replied grimly to this:

"Yes, now you are truly a king; but now your troubles really begin, for having disposed of Sigurd you have next to solve the question of Eystein. And perhaps that will not be so easy. Eystein is no fool if what is said of him be true, and he will take heed by Sigurd's fate to walk warily of you."

As it fell out, Eystein came from the East about three days after Sigurd's slaying with thirty longships. He was fresh home from his viking cruise and heard along the coast of the fray in Bergen and sailed his ships up the fjord to Floruvagar, where he lay as if making up his mind to an onfall.

Gregorius and his friends suggested that this was as good an occasion as any for trying conclusions with Eystein; but Swain joined forces with Erling and argued that they should be contented with the good luck they had had.

"He who strains for overmuch fortune at the one cast is in danger of losing all his winnings," he said. "If you must fight with a king you should slay him—and it is not so easy to slay him in battle afloat as on the land."

The end of it was that mediators passed between the two Kings, and since neither of them was anxious to fight at the time they agreed to keep peace, but without any discussion of terms. Then King Eystein fared south to Viken, and King Ingi started upon a triumphal progress to Throndhjem, seizing all of Sigurd's possessions that came in his way. Nor did any men say him nay or object to the course he took. On the contrary, wherever he journeyed he was respectfully greeted, and the clergy and the men of property, farmers and noblemen as well as merchants, acclaimed him as a warrior king and accepted his rule.

There was peace and quiet in the land, and all the folk declared that it was better to have two kings than three.

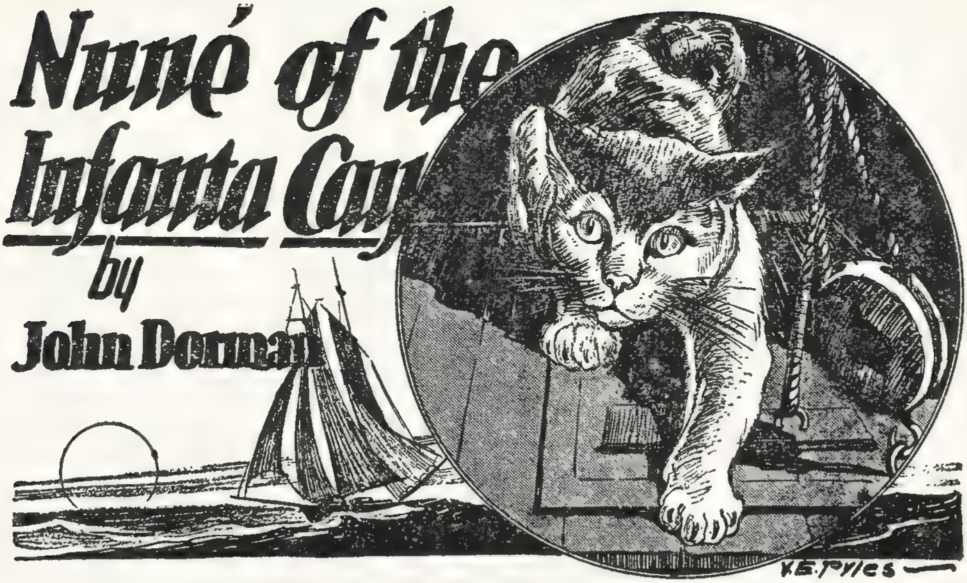
Oddi the Little made a rhyme about it:

Three Kings had the land—
Swain made them two.
Now watch we for the hand
Shall halve the two.

Nuné of the Infanta Cay

by

John Dorman



Author of "The House of the Broken Poniard."

AND the *señor* gives her to me? A thousand thousand thanks! *Par Dios,* she is a creature of fire, proud as an unbacked stallion, graceful—by the ——, she has the grace of a mountain cataract and the deep soul of the storm blown seas! Her spirit is as unbreakable as the hearts of the sainted dead! Yes, her home shall be with me and I shall call her——

What, does the *señor* laugh that I should speak thus of only a kitten? Let him hold his mirth, for who can say that there is not a soul within this bit of fur as well as in the flesh and bones of men?

Let us see, I shall call her Nuné, in memory of another—in truth, the only other—of her kind that I have known. Yes, *chiquita*, Señorita Nuné you shall be, until perchance you take a husband and become the mother of many little spitfires. Then I shall call you Señora—something else! There are many things one must not tell a *señorita*, it is not so, *caballero?* Ha!

What of the other Nuné? Twice, sir, she saved my life aboard a schooner called the *Infanta Cay*. As the *señor* knows, an *infanta* is a princess of the royal blood. Here and there I have seen one such who was a sorry hag, but never one so ancient and so dirty as this *Infanta Cay!* After it was all over Nuné——

Well, *señor*, the last I saw of Nuné she she was clinging to a bundle of shingles such as the *Yanquis* use, drifting about in the Gulf of Mexico. It may well be that she lived and that this is a daughter of hers, many times removed. For who can trace the descendants of a cat for thirty years?

I met Nuné as I strolled along the deck, and the *señor* will believe that I swept off my old hat and bowed very low indeed! Yes, lower by far than I have bowed to many ladies, for Nuné was a daughter of the royal blood, a princess in all truth. Even her shining fur held a cast of purple like the togas of the kings of old, for she was purest blue Maltese, as is this little Nuné. The captain of the schooner had brought her from some port in Europe when she was so small as to sleep in a cap, but when I saw her she was as large as a cat may be, and very large for her sex. She sang very graciously and kissed my cheek when I knelt to stroke her.

I came upon this *Infanta Cay* in old Port Tampa, for at this time few ships could reach the city of Tampa itself. In that city, *señor*, I had been a house-man for a very fine gambling club, although of course it was not called that. I am not proud of it, sir, but the *señor* knows that a son of the Dons of Castille cannot dig in his mines with thick-tongued laborers nor ride herd with beardless *vaqueros*—it is not done. Nor can a gambler always live as honorably as he might wish.

So I was a house-man in the Planter's Club until one night I lost much of my employer's money to two very shrewd villains at poker. Never was there gambler so clever that he did not lose, but my *maestro* thought differently! Those two were very crafty and very bold. They marked the cards with tiny smudges fron anilin pencils which they kept in their vest-pockets so that they could read them as easily as I—all cards in that house were marked, *señor*, and all house-men taught to read them. And then they were two to one, which is always easier, and my *maestro* was at fault in bidding me play them thus. They—what do you say?—whipsawed me! ——, but they went through the thousand dollars with which I began the game as goes a bullet through a drum-head!

Always they knew what I held, yet I could not always be sure of their hands. When I had strong cards they did not play; when I held just good ones they raised me, one after the other, until I must drop out. A device of the devil, that whipsawing, but one very popular among dishonest gamblers. And, *señor*, except for myself I do not know any gamblers who are not dishonest.

Then there is always the luck, which for me was very bad. So it happened that in a very few hours I lost three thousand dollars of my employer's money, my position as well, and my right to live in Tampa. Yes! The *maestro* was in a very great wrath over the money and he requested me to leave the town. He made no threats, but there was no need for them. I knew well enough, *señor*, that any one who conducts a very popular gaming-house where it is illegal has friends among the fathers of the city. And often he has men who think little of slipping a knife among the ribs of a wandering gambler, for over such there is small hue or cry.

The following evening I came upon the *Infanta Cay* drawing anchor for Habaña, with a hull full of timbers and a deck-load of boards and shingles. From the money in my belt I paid a passage fee of one hundred dollars *Americano*, which was too much, but the captain was a Cuban with no great love for the blood of the Dons, and he could see that I was anxious to be away.

One of those vessels, the schooner was, which still make a very good business of bringing *aguadiente* to Florida from the sugar-mills of the islands. Outwardly they are fishing-craft or freighters. There was another passenger—I shared a cabin in the hold with a man called Brackbridge—I cannot mouth these *Yanqui* names! Also, ha! there were many other vermin in the cabin, so many that they could have stolen the very blankets had they wished!

This *Yanqui* was a very ordinary man, except that he was more than ordinarily dirty. About of a size with me, *señor*, with a look as if some one had fired powder into his face. He spoke English most villainously, with many strange words and accents. Just one of the vermin of the waterfront, but he shared a cabin with Ramon del Valle! ——! A pretty fellow to have snoring in the bunk above me!

At daybreak we had just cleared the great bar which lies across the mouth of Tampa Bay, and at noon the wind had so nearly died that the sluggish *Infanta Cay* could not keep steerage-way.

Then the captain and his very greasy crew of three other Cubans and three negroes loaded some of the great wicker-wrapped demijohns of *aguadiente* into a small boat which was trailing behind. They lowered the anchor at the bow, but the schooner was moving so little that the line would not run from the capstan after the iron struck bottom. So they left it that way and fell into an argument over who should go ashore to trade the liquor. We were within sight of land, *señor*, and I presume there was a fishing camp or village somewhere among the islands.

They were drinking—there was no discipline. Has the *señor* ever tasted the sugar rum of Cuba? It is far more fiery than our own *mescal*, even. *Aguadiente* is called an ugly drink, but of a truth it is a liquor only ugly men can stomach, whereupon they become more ugly.

I admit that I was well pleased when they quit waving knives in each other's faces and settled the matter by all going ashore. Yes, leaving their vessel with many sails set and the anchor barely touching bottom!

Brackridge and I stood at the rail and watched them off. Then we went down to the cabin of the captain to play poker until they should return. It was a room in every way worthy of its owner, *caballero*, with dirty dishes on the table and soiled clothing everywhere. But it was the best of the *Infanta Cay*, so we threw the dishes and clothes into the foul bunk and began the game.

In a box in the corner lay Nuné and a suckling brood of three. I was very surprized to find her a *señora* with a family, for of a truth her lithe form and proud appearance gave no hint of the cares of maternity.

So we played, but it was a dismal game. Two-handed draw poker has not many thrills when played for small stakes. At the hour of four I had won some twenty dollars. Even this little amount angered Brackbridge so that he swore foully and continually, for he was a very poor loser, and the *señor* knows that no man ever lost with the good grace with which he won!

Slowly the bets grew larger and larger, until many times there were thirty or forty dollars in the pot. And that, *caballero*, is not a small game. Then it grew dusk in the cabin and while Brackbridge found oil for the lamp I went on deck to look for the captain and his crew, but there was no sign of them. The sun, perhaps an hour from setting, still shone brilliantly. I noticed that the wind was a bit fresher, but it seemed nothing much to me, a man bred in the hills. So I went below again.

Seven o'clock, and I had won more than two hundred dollars which seemed to be all the money my opponent had in his purse. He mouthed some very great blasphemies and dug into a money-belt about his loins to bring forth a great sheaf of *Americano* notes. I was very much surprized, the *señor* will believe, for his clothing was even more nondescript than my own, and I was clad in sorry garments. I have since thought that Señor Brackbridge had even a better reason than I to leave Tampa very hurriedly!

"Now, spiggoty, we'll have a game!"

The words did not please me, *señor*. Even a peon laborer is entitled to more respect.

"*Si, Señor Gringo*," I answered him.

But his words and the look on his face were such that I put my hand down to my waist and loosened the hilt of my dagger, which was in a sheath on my money-belt—I wore no girdle.

WINNING and losing, the game went on. At nine I was more than five hundred dollars ahead, and Brackbridge was becoming very sullen. Then, *señor*, happened one of those very rare instances. I dealt, and Brackbridge laughed as he looked at his cards—it was the first time I ever heard him in mirth, and I cared not for it. Before I had ever seen all my hand he had opened for twenty dollars. I found my cards to be the deuce, trey, four and five of clubs, with another card which I have now forgotten.

I raised, of course, and he raised in turn. By ten and twenty dollars at a time we raised and raised, until there was much money on the board—nearly five hundred dollars. It was all he had, that which he had placed in the center of the table. Then he drew from his waist a very beautiful pearl-handled revolver, saying—

"How much against this, greaser?"

The *señor* knows that I am not a greaser; that my blood is as free from taint as his own. But I let pass the remark, for all my life I have encountered much trouble without searching for any!

For answer I placed two twenty-dollar notes in the center—

"This much, Señor Brackbridge—if the pistol is unloaded."

"Not enough guts to look at a loaded gun, spiggoty?" he sneered.

"It is not my custom to play with a loaded pistol lying at another man's hand, *señor*," I said, and I looked squarely into his dirty face until he dropped his eyes and took the cartridges from his revolver.

"Cards, *señor?*" I asked, politely enough.

"These will do, spick."

"I will take one, sir," I announced, and drew a card from the top of the pack.

And, by the ——, it was the ace of clubs! A straight flush, *caballero!* I had been doubtful of backing my short hand so heavily, but it is ever hard to stop before the draw.

It was very silent while I waited for Brackbridge to speak. Since he had opened it was his privilege to bet or pass—we were not playing table-stakes, which calls for a show-down when any man has all his visible money in the pot. Then Nuné began to sing very loudly, so loudly, indeed, that it sounded like a small saw suddenly set in operation. I did not mind it, *señor*, for I like all animals to be happy in my presence.

But it angered Brackbridge, so that he threw at her a small dish in which we had been placing our cigaret stubs. It struck over her head on the wall, showering her nest with tobacco ashes and bits of porcelain, and she stopped singing very abruptly. Presently she trotted out of the cabin door.

"Show-down?" he asked at last. "My money is all there now."

"Of course, *señor,*" I answered, and faced my straight flush of clubs.

He looked but once and his face drew taut so that the powder stains seemed even blacker than before—he had thought his hand unbeatable. Nor, for that matter, had I beaten him for he too faced a five-high straight flush. Of hearts, it was.

"I have you this time, Mex," he said, very savagely, as a man will speak when he asserts a thing he knows to be untrue.

"Indeed, *señor?*" I asked, "are not our two hands equal?"

"Not by a —— sight! Hearts is the higher suit, spiggotty."

And he reached out his hand for the money.

With my left I stopped it; pushed it back.

"Señor Brackbridge, among gentlemen of honor it is necessary to replay such hands as these."

He swore several very great oaths, but he saw that my right hand was within my clothing and he knew it clasped a weapon of some kind, so he kept his foul paw away from the money. Once he looked at the pistol as if he would give much to have it in his hand, and loaded!

"If it please you, Brackbridge, we will cut for deal. Then each man shall be given five cards and the highest hand according to the rules we have played shall win the pot."

He nodded, for there was nothing else to do. I won the deal.

As I riffled the cards lightly together he said—

"From the looks of your hands, spick, you never do anything else but play cards."

I am not ashamed of my profession, *señor*, and I replied—

"It is true that I am a gambler."

"I thought so! And a——"

He stopped, but of a truth I think that he had meant to say a very dishonest one. He would have lied, *caballero*, for I had indeed played fairly with him. A man who cheats when luck is very strong in his favor is tempting the saints to punish him.

"Does Señor Brackbridge assert that I have played unfairly?" I asked as I offered him the cards to cut. It may be that I spoke softly, but of a truth my hands itched for his throat.

He opened his mouth to reply, but Nuné cut him short. The *señor* has heard the wail of a loon at night—so it was she cried from the deck above us. Yes, cried as might a soul call out in eerie terror as it parts from the body of its sins. Very bad, sir, and the flesh on my spine crawled upward!

"She salutes the angel of death!"

It is very queer, *caballero*, very queer, but while I felt my tongue round out the words my ears could not hear that I said them, and I had meant to speak aloud! The *Yanqui's* hand hung over the pack of cards I had extended to him, and his mouth gaped open like the jaws of an empty purse.

Pat, pat, pat, spoke Nuné's feet as she trotted toward the cabin. ——! It did not seem possible that a beast so light and beautiful could of a sudden tread so heavily! In she came, seized a kit in her jaws and made off again toward the deck. That is not an unusual thing, of course, for a cat very often moves her family without much ado being made over it. But in her intensity of purpose, in the heavy blows her feet sounded on the floor, and in the memory of that one weird shriek—in those things, *señor*, there was a dread portent.

Brackbridge recovered first; in men who have no souls above the level of meat and drink and a game of cards the drum-beats of fate sound lightly, if they sound at all. He laughed at me and swore evilly.

"Come, deal," he said, and cut the cards in two sections, pushing both out toward me.

"Did I cut them to suit you?" he growled, as I reached for the proper section of the deck.

"You cut the cards to suit yourself, not me, *gringo,*" I answered him—in truth, I was tiring of his tongue.

"This whole —— game has gone pretty much to suit *you*, unless I miss a mighty fine guess!"

It was very plain then, *señor*, that something other than five cards apiece might be needed to settle the matter of the money between us. But I only said—

"The *señor* means——"

"I mean you're a —— crook, spiggoty! Savvey that?"

I understood! And I said—

"Señor Brackbridge lies, and he knows he lies!"

I stood up, still holding in my hand the part of the pack of cards. And as I arose

I noticed something which neither of us had before—the old *Infanta Cay* was rolling heavily. In a very brief instant, sir, I thought of many things; that the crew had not returned, and were probably sleeping off their liquor somewhere behind the islands; that the schooner was under many sails and barely anchored; that Brackbridge and myself knew little of taking in the canvas—and that a fight between us was very close at hand.

And at that moment I heard Nuné pattering back for another kitten. Then the squall struck us and the very ancient princess with the top-heavy deck-load heeled far over. The floor fell from beneath me and I careened against the heavy framework of the captain's bunk. My head struck dully, and for a moment the air was very full of little stars!

It may have been a minute at the most that I clung to the bunk with my face buried in the filthy blankets. Slowly the *Infanta Cay* straightened again, and I returned to life to see a very queer sight.

Nuné crouched on one end of the table, spitting and hissing. Brackbridge bent over it, holding in one hand the pearl-gripped pistol and with the other stuffing money into his pocket. As I stood there gathering my senses he took the last of the notes—took the ones which had been before me and did not belong in the pot.

I shouted something, *señor*, and tensed my muscles to spring at him. It did not occur to me that he could have had time enough to load the pistol before getting the money, nor even that he would have thought of such a thing.

But he had—my cry had not died on my lips before he whirled and shot. It seemed that the gun spoke in my very beard, but another roll of the vessel saved me, for I reeled again just as he fired. I heard the thud of the bullet striking the wood of the bunk. It seems very strange, *señor*, but I have known men to miss one who stood not a dozen feet away, and when there was no storm-tossed schooner to interfere.

It may be that he thought he had hit me, for he lowered the revolver and grinned evilly, muttering something about a "cursed greaser." But in a moment he saw that I was unhurt.

He would have fired again, but just as the gleaming weapon swung into line with my body Nuné sprang. Her harsh growls died very quickly; her crouched body became a blurred streak of hate as she flung herself at his throat. Her teeth sank into his jowls; her flaying claws ripped great marks down his face and neck.

And I, *caballero*, I retreated! I do not know why, for a man does not stop to reason matters of the kind. I should have drawn my dagger and closed with him—but I chose to run. I admit that I have a very great horror of a pistol, as do many of my blood. Cold, clean steel is another thing, and I have met men a time or two, toe to toe, each with a knife in his right hand and his left arm wrapped in a jacket or poncho. That is one thing, *señor*, but it is yet another to attack with a knife a man who has a loaded pistol. The cleanest thrust will not kill on the instant, and in one dying breath a man may shoot his slayer.

But I fled because—because, by ——, I was very much afraid with the strange, numbing fear which strikes a man at times. Even a man fighting with a mad cat is yet able to fire a shot in his defense, of course! Yes, I, Ramon del Valle, son of many Dons, crawled upon the heaving deck in a very sorry plight.

NOR did my composure return to me in the open air. The *Infanta Cay* was hard set, *señor*, even a man of the hills could see that. Her deck was a tangled mass of shingles and lumber which, broken from the moorings, charged wildly from one rail to the other. Rope-ends cracked like the lashes of many *rebenques;* great pieces of the canvas tore loose and sailed away. It was a very bad scene, *caballero*, very bad—the more to one who has never loved the sea.

The sky pressed upon me like a smoky pot hung over my head, dark and choking. Very often, it seemed, the storm fiends sent great forked flares of lightning down to split the sea. For a moment they would seem to cleave the blue-black water in many pieces; then the waves would swallow the lightning and all was as black as before.

As I clung to the rail the old schooner stopped her wild flight as a bull stops when the *rieta* tightens on the saddle-horn, and the pony sits back on his haunches. Yes, exactly like that! In that moment, sir, before ever the seas boiled over the vessel from every way, I found in my hand the half-deck of cards from which I had been about to deal, and I slipped them in my pocket.

I knew what had happened—the short anchor rope had allowed the *Infanta Cay* to drag the iron off into deep water where it did not reach the bottom. Then of a sudden we had struck a shoal, and the anchor had hung in rocks or coral.

At the very first shock there was a great groaning as if the *Infanta Cay* had a mind to go to pieces, and the mast at the front—I think it is called the foremast—broke off close to the deck and dragged over the rail.

Completely over the vessel washed the waves, but whether they came from the front or rear I could not say. *Señor*, I renounced my soul to God! For of a truth it seemed that a vessel could not be so far under water and survive. But she did. Yes, shook off the water as a dog might have done; rose very sullenly until she mounted the waves again. In a blinding flash of lightning I saw that the broken mast had washed away, and that not the half of the shingles and lumber remained on deck.

And of a sudden I knew what to do. As the schooner steadied a moment I kicked off my shoes and ran to the capstan—it took but a second to cut the anchor rope which held the *Infanta Cay* down to the waves. I thanked all the saints, *caballero*, that I was armed with a two-edged dagger instead of a bodkin of a stiletto, as was my usual way.

But I was not in time to avoid a second very great deluge. This time I clung to the rope about the capstan and was near strangled before the water cleared away. Much water was in the hold from the first great wash, so that the boat was hardly more than a raft kept afloat by the cargo of lumber. So I lay there with my dagger in my teeth and my hands twined about the rope while the waves sucked and pulled at me. In truth, *señor*, I thought that my arms would leave their sockets!

And for many minutes after the *Infanta Cay* had righted herself I crouched there by the capstan, clearing my eyes and stomach of sea water, very sick indeed! But it was a great good fortune that I had not moved, for as I lay there gasping a flash of lightning showed me Brackbridge standing at the rail with his pistol in his hand. When a man is sick and cold he is not brave, and I admit that he looked very terrible to me.

It was a long long while that I lay there, hardly daring to move, and shuddering with the chill of my wet clothing. At last the lightning, which at first had flashed in my very face, came from farther away; the wind died down a little and the rain ceased—all the time I had been on deck it had rained as if the skies had been set on edge to drain!

It was hours that I crouched before the capstan, for when the stars began to show a little again the great dipper in the north pointed to two hours in the morning. Then presently my nerve and wits returned to me—or perhaps it was the courage of cowards, which comes to all men in times of desperate need. I set the dagger back between my teeth, with the hilt toward my right hand, and I drew off my jacket that it might not bind my shoulders. I all but laughed aloud, *señor*, when I found myself beginning to wrap it about my left arm. Instead, I tied it fast to the anchor-rope, for a coat about an arm is very poor protection against leaden bullets!

There was no sight or sound of Brackbridge, nor had there been since that one brief glimpse as he stood at the rail. My soul to God! It is not easy to begin a stalk for a man armed with a pistol when you have but a dagger! But, *señor*, I had a very great desire to settle that pot which had not yet been settled! And if I waited until daylight he could riddle me with bullets at his leisure.

I peered here and there; then I straightened up and walked aft—I think that is the term. I should have crawled, but I am neither an Indian nor a snake; sliding on my belly is not natural with me. Once I stopped very quickly and in no little fear, but the sound I heard was only Nuné pattering about on some errand of her own. Cats are blessed with many such.

Then for a moment I thought my saints had forgotten me, in spite of the candles I have burned to them. For the moon of a sudden shone as sweetly as if there had never been a storm! Yes, and I there in the middle of the deck with naught but bare boards about me!

Even as I crouched to spring for the protection of the mast which was in the center of the vessel a jet of fire spurted from the stern of the boat and a bullet whizzed by my ears. That of the moon, as the *señor* knows, is the poorest of lights for shooting.

I was no longer afraid at all—although I broke a tooth on my dagger it was not in fear. I was never one to kill for sport, but of all games the hunting of man is greatest. For that matter, I had no deliberate intention of killing him, but I did wish very much to keep him from killing me—and to settle the little score we had left undone.

So I lay there in the shadow of the mast until the moon hid behind a cloud, which was only a very few minutes. ——! There was not even a plan of action in my mind! Of a truth, there hardly could be, for all I knew of his whereabouts was that he was in the stern of the schooner. But when the moon hid again I moved in that direction. A plan, *señor*, will always come!

This time I did not walk, but crawled very close indeed to the deck! Very slowly, of course, clearing from my way shingles and pieces of board. And this time I watched the moon.

When next it broke through the clouds I was hidden between the rail and a few bunches of shingles, back nearly to the pilot-house. It seemed an hour that the moon shone most brilliantly—never had I known a moon to shine so bright—but there was no sight of my *gringo* friend. It might be that he slept, I thought. But the *señor* will believe that I did not think so strongly enough to venture out in the moonlight to see!

I heard kittens mewing somewhere, but I could not locate the sound. My watch ticked with a voice to raise the dead, and had it not been a very good watch I would have dropped it overboard. *Caramba!* There was yet one very good thing! From where I lay I could see the surf breaking on the shore, which was better than thinking myself many miles out in the gulf. For the land I know, and am not afraid of.

An hour may be a very long time, and this hour was thus. The shingles cut me upon one side and the rail upon the other. Also a rat walked over me, which was not pleasant. But I dared not move at all. Once I thought I heard a door close very softly, but I could not be sure.

At last came Nuné from behind me like a breath of dust; never a sound at all. Straight to the pilot-house she went, and sprang to the sill of a port which I had not seen was open. *Boom!* And Nuné turned many flips falling out of that window! I thought she was killed, but she was not—a cat is a very small mark to shoot at, and Brackbridge was not a marksman. I think she was only frightened and fell backward. And, by ——, it is unpleasant to have a pistol-flash singe your whiskers!

But she was a very brave Nuné. I saw her crouch to spring, and this time she leaped clear through the port. Very quickly I knew what to do, and throwing caution to the many winds I ran to the door at the rear of the pilot-house as if the devils pursued me. Locked! Then back again to the port through which Nuné had sprung. Within there were sounds of many kinds: growls of which even our lion of the mountains need not have been ashamed, oaths and blasphemy, and the noise of furniture crashing about.

I sank to my knees and peered within. After a moment I could see quite plainly. Brackbridge stood in the center of the little room. Nuné flashed about him, leaping in and out more after the fashion of a dog than a cat. Even as I looked Nuné sprang to the back of his neck and clung desperately. And then a plan came to me.

In this little instant that I knelt there I had been thinking, as a man will. I could not reach him from the window, and I feared to throw my dagger because it was very light and might not wound him badly. And surely if I tried to climb through the little window—it was not more than five hands each way—he would shoot me long ere I could reach him. So it was, *señor*, that I came to do something at which I have many times wondered, for never have I taken a greater chance.

Yes, with the dagger in my hand, arms outstretched before me, I dived through the window of that pilot-house as the *señor* has seen clowns do in one of those trick houses in a *Yanqui* circus. Even as I was in the air my left hand caught the pistol and my right set the dagger to the hilt in his stomach. We fell in a very tangled heap, and I arose presently with so much blood upon me that I thought I too was wounded. For a moment Brackbridge threshed about after the fashion of a fowl with a slit throat, but I had his pistol—he could thresh to his heart's content!

——, *caballero*, you have seen the blood spurt from the throat of a butchered steer. How it could flow thus from the fat belly of a —— *Yanqui* I do not know. Ha, the *señor's* pardon! For a moment I forgot his race! But he knows that I speak not of all the *Yanquis*.

Even the beautiful Nuné was smeared with it, as I found when I lighted the little lamp above the compass. A man bred in the hills keeps dry matches, always. Yes! Her red tongue flashed like a flame in the wind as she preened her body, yet at the same time she sang like a violin very much out of tune.

So we washed off the stains of our victory, Nuné and I, and took stock of ourselves. The kittens were as dead as Brackbridge, for they had been crushed in the mêlée, either by the stool and table which comprised the furniture of the pilot-house, or by Brackbridge's feet. Nuné had placed them on an oilskin coat on the floor. It was very sad, sir, to see her lick them and hear her crying. I had not the courage to take them away from her, dead although they were.

And I had much trouble of my own. I must dispose of the body of Señor Brackbridge, and I must dispose of myself. I had done no wrong, of course, but a Spaniard would have some difficulty explaining what had happened to him. The captain and his crew would swear that Brackbridge had been with me, and would charge me with his murder. If an *Americano* had killed him he would have been a very bad man, worthy of death. But for a foreigner and a gambler, ——! He would have become a very saint and his killer would have sweat blood in a prison camp. That is the way of all *Yanqui* courts, for I have seen them deliver justice.

I must throw the body overboard, efface all signs of the fight——

THEN out of the pilot-house I saw sunrise painting the heavy surf with a rose-filled brush. The beach was hardly two miles away, and the schooner under only a few rags of sails was making slowly toward it. I turned the wheel a little and lashed it fast with a bit of rope. After that, for my plans were changed very much, I went out to search for a raft. That was easy; among the deck-load had been a quantity of cyprus boards and some half-dozen very large ones were left. It was not hard to fasten them together with nails and rope so that they would support my weight. I pushed the raft overboard and tied it to the rail—that too was easy, for the wood, as the *señor* doubtless knows, is very light.

Then, *caramba!* it came to me as a thunder-crash in the clear heat of a desert noon! In the pockets of Señor Brackbridge was much money which had as yet no owner! Eight hundred dollars in *Yanqui* notes I found, wadded and wet — eight hundred dollars. It was in my money-belt before I knew it, and out again very quickly.

A Don del Valle does not steal from dead or living, *señor*, and especially from the dead. A living man may be a great thief and a murderer, but a dead man is with the saints, and it is not fitting that the living either judge or rob him.

What to do? Then I remembered. The *señor* will recall that at the beginning of the trouble I had been about to deal two hands of five cards each to decide which won the pot, after each had held a five-high straight flush. Yes, and I told the *señor* that afterward I found the half-pack of cards in my hand and placed them in my pocket. There they were, stuck very tightly together.

So I split them off one by one with my dagger, and dealt them out as I would have done if Señor Brackbridge had lived and had not chosen to depend upon his pistol instead of upon his luck. An ace to him, a deuce to me, a king to him, a deuce to me, a five to him, a six to me, a king to him, a deuce to me—no, that is wrong. But in the end he held a pair of kings and I but a pair of deuces. He won, of course—he would have done much better to trust his luck!

Back in his dirty pocket went the five hundred; back to my belt the three hundred which he had taken from my place at the table. I had some three hundred from him very honestly, sir, and the saints do not defend a man who steals from the dead. *Dios*, I would as soon rob a priest of his cassock and cross!

My soul to God, he was a gruesome sight! Nuné had marked him well; his powder-blackened face was like a fresh-plowed field from the rake of her claws. In his jowls and throat her teeth had torn ragged wounds. And he was all over blood, of course.

So I crossed his arms over his breast and spread some torn sails about his body—I could find no fitter drape. I even attempted to say a mass over him, but, by

——, I could think of nothing but *pater noster!* I did not say that, for it is a prayer more fit for the living. However, Nuné still howled for her dead, so he was not without services of a sort!

By this time the schooner had come within a mile from land, and I must be busy. According to the compass, the wind blew about from the north. After very much thought and calculation I cut and tore loose a portion of one of the great sails, which was wrapped around the mast in the center. Then I cut loose two pulleys, climbed each mast to set one up as far as I could reach, and threaded a rope through each pulley. After that I dragged my sail into position on the deck and tied each bottom corner to a mast. There was my sail, when it was raised, as large as the side of a small house.

With the wind blowing from the north against this sail it should help drive the *Infanta Cay* out to the south and west into the open gulf—it was no part of my design to allow the vessel to land where I did.

As I have said it, *señor*, it all sounds very easy that I should rig a sail and decide which way the schooner would go with the sail thus rigged. But of a truth it was not so easy, for at the time I knew but little of the art of sailing, although since I have made a few more voyages and seen the way men work a sailing-ship.

When my sail at last was up I was very near shore and I turned the wheel far over to turn her around. I was afraid she would not turn for me, but at last she was headed into open water. She moved very slowly indeed, for her deck was almost awash, but still she did move a little. I could see that my sail would at least keep her from coming ashore at once, so I lashed the wheel into position, when after much maneuvering I finally had the *Infanta Cay* set in the course in which she moved the best. A man will learn anything quickly, *señor*, when there is great need of hurry.

After that I waded nearly to my neck to get my box from the cabin. I took from it a few clothes and things and threw it overboard, for I did not want anything to show who had sent Señor Brackbridge on a lone cruise with a lashed helm and a grotesque sail set between two bare masts. Then I went to find Nuné.

Señor, she would not come! She lay quietly in my arms until I had found the paddle I had made and was about to board my raft. Then she sprang back to the schooner again and I could not catch her! I thought it was the kittens, so I went to the pilot-house and fetched them out. She came to smell of them, but she kept away from my hand, and she would not follow when I lowered myself to the raft.

It was very plain then why she would not come, *caballero*. Men of the sea claim for each ship a soul, a heart, a—something! I am not apt at pretty words. Nuné was the soul of the stricken *Infanta Cay;* not even her dead kits could draw her from the vessel!

I climbed again to the deck of the schooner and set the spigot of a cask of fresh water in the pilot-house so that it dripped into a pannikin—it was all that I could do for her, for the food was ruined with salt water. Then back again to my raft. I cast off and paddled toward the beach, but when I was some distance away I heard Nuné call and turned to look.

She was crouched on the rail and as I shouted to her she sprang into the water; the *Infanta Cay* was giving up her soul! I had hardly begun to paddle back when a puff of wind listed the schooner over and a bundle of shingles dropped off into the water in front of her very nose. She crawled up on it and all my calls would not get her off.

I could move but slowly, for little waves and big ones washed over me. Indeed, I was hard set to make any headway at all except toward the beach. This was because of the tide, I think. And the shingles seemed to follow the schooner out into the open water! It may be, of course, that they were caught in a trailing rope.

So at last I turned, when the chase became hopeless, and came ashore without difficulty near the north end of an island called Cayo Costa. The west coast of Florida is all islands, *señor*—thick as flies about a stable! As I was changing into the clothing I had brought ashore I saw smoke to the eastward and on the opposite side of the island I found a fishing camp of Cubans. It was called Terivas' Camp, I think. Thence it was easy to get passage to Habaña.

I have since learned that could I have sailed the *Infanta Cay* into a harbor or anchorage I might have gained a deal of money in salvage. Also I might have found a murder charge! No, I am well satisfied that I gave over the schooner to Señor Brackbridge! Nor have I ever heard of how her cruise terminated.

And Nuné—except for this second Nuné there was never animal like her! In Habaña I burned many candles and bought many prayers for her. Ha, the priests never knew that the one they prayed for was a cat! I told them only that they must speak for the soul of the beautiful Nuné, whom I feared was lost at sea! ——! I did not know there were so many saints watching those who brave the ocean, for it seemed a thousand whose shrines must have light!

Ah, Nuné, *chiquita mia*, and you shall be the soul of this poor house as another Nuné was the soul of the *Infanta Cay!* A milch cow shall be bought this day and——

Hasta manaña, señor. A thousand thanks for the gift of this second Nuné, and if an old man can——

Now to the *hacienda*, little one, that we may drink rich milk to the memory of the first of your name!

WEALTH

by Fred E. Truman

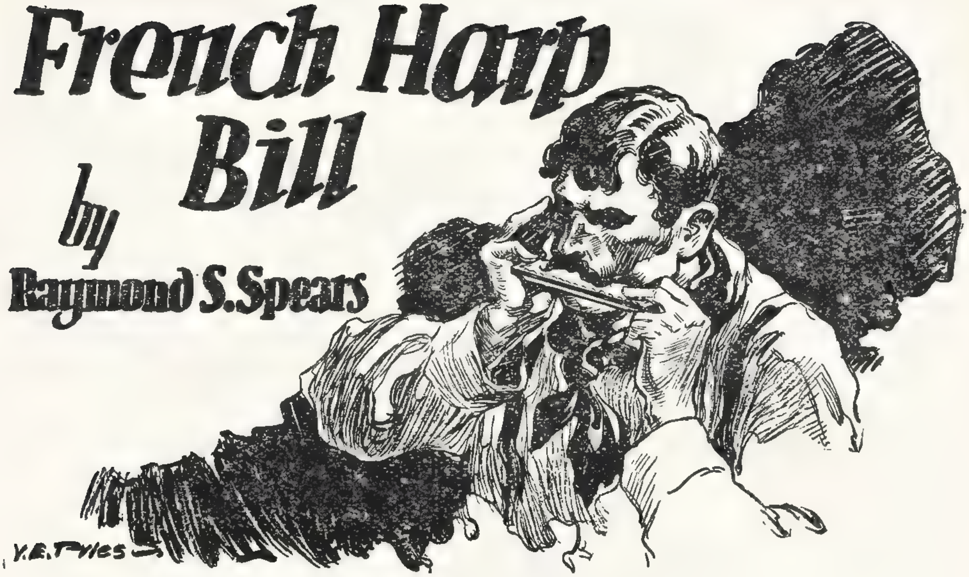
WHERE sea meets sky,
  Crimson clouds flare
Like ribbons red
  In jet-black hair.
There on the rim,
  So I was told,
Is a rich mine
  Of gipsy gold.

I came afar,
  Chasing my dreams,
Seeking my gold
  When sunlight streams
Into the west.
  Nothing I found—
Only the sea
  And the bare ground.

Only a mine
  Of wealth untold,
A silver dawn
  And sunset gold.
Only riches
  I can not spend.
Only a trail
  Without an end.

French Harp Bill

by Raymond S. Spears



Author of "The Word of a Hard Man," "Riding Back," etc.

FRETFUL CENTER is the trading-town of a large and varied region consisting of sage and alkali, mountains with a few junipers on them and mining prospects, and mines, cattle ranches, trapper cabins and other signs of prosperity of the present or future. A general store dominates the embryo city. A number of shacks and bungalows, mostly out of plumb, extend along the one street which comprises the residential section of the town. The other street, faced by a large store, is the business district, and along it are two garages, a shoe repairer's shop, the cobbler being also a saddle and harness maker, a two-story weather-beaten hotel and the Palace of Pleasure.

The most important citizen in town was Dickman, President of the bank, who was also the mayor of Fretful Center. Leidman Brothers owned the big store and attended strictly to business. The shoemaker was Cicero Contello, who loved his trades. The liveliest institution was the Palace of Pleasure—is yet, for that matter—owned by "Blue Chip" Midlane, a tall, straight-backed, small-eyed gambler who was playing close and careful after many years of squandering recklessness, but who nevertheless was somewhat darkly lawless in his varied tactics.

Blue Chip was a hang-over out of the days long supposed to have vanished. Indeed, to look at him one would recognize the professional gambler of forty years previous, cold, merciless, yet withal a rather handsome-looking fellow, wearing his black coat, his wide-brimmed black hat, his highly polished boots, his gray trousers—and flat, inconspicuous but deadly concealed weapons—with a certain dignity and tone that gave him genuine importance in the landscape, or specially in the Palace of Pleasure, which he watched with keen, appraising and steadfast concern.

A floor manager, one Pete Gopher, overlooked everything but trouble on the dancing-floor. Blue Chip dominated the wheels, green tables and all kinds of apparatus of chance. Two or three old and broken men, porters, puttered up and down, polishing, keeping the place clean.

Among others, a girl flitted up and down through the halls, corridors and rooms of Blue Chip's domain. She was not exactly young, nor yet old. She was pretty, pale, blue-eyed; and her tongue was gifted with ready impudence. She had come in lately in her own automobile. Her dancing commended her instantly to Pete Gopher. Her careless demeanor in no way made her less welcome.

She stopped to look toward a chair that was tipped back in the snug corner behind the roaring stove in the ballroom to survey an object, a kind of relic of a man, who returned her look with surprize and finally with amazed interest. Then he dropped his gaze, taking stock of himself. He was "French Harp" Bill, whose resources of music were expended on a harmonica, or mouth-organ. When the countless talking-machine and numerous player-piano records palled on the cowboys, miners, roamers of the high plateaux, and they longed for music that was human, they rousted out French Harp Bill from his snug corner, and demanded that he "play something."

Some people scorn French-harp music. The range of tone is not great, the keys are limited and the sounds are doubtlessly difficult to associate with classic refrains. But when this man played, the merry-makers would often forget their feet and stand with bated breath, listening to the tunes of long ago and far away, back to the days of innocence before their arrival at the current desolations of their respective hearts and lives.

Her name, the girl said, was May Rand. She had just stopped over in Fretful Center for purposes of her own; and even if she was light-footed, gay-voiced and seemed careless in her behavior, she instantly made it plain that she brooked no passing of certain rigid bounds. She would claim her bit for dancing, so much a number, but resented Pete's suggestion that she make another bit by leading patrons to the dark and noisome blind tiger. She was so particular, in fact, that men who had long been wanton and savage, began to spruce up and play the gentleman—that some of them had once been.

She heard French Harp Bill play his mouth-organ and approved of his effort most vigorously. She inquired around about him and learned the sad and pitiful facts about this person who clung to but the one attribute of a man—his music. He was cuffed by all who passed him. Cowboys assaulted him with their quirts as a passing amusement. Gamblers forced him to play with them by violent threats, and stole away the silver and nickel which he gathered in.

When he was starved, miserable and weak with privation, they taught him to crawl, to rise up on his hind legs, and "Speak!" like a dog—pleading for some half-gnawed sandwich. They even brought in some mongrel yellow brute of the streets and, holding the dog on one side of a ring, held French Harp Bill on the other. Then, throwing down some few chunks of meat and bread, or even thick, greasy fried-cakes, they turned the two loose to fight for and grab at the food each sorely needed.

May Rand heard and saw these things with her own eyes. She gave no sign, save perhaps a puckering of her lips and a drawing-down of her eyebrows, to indicate her feelings. She knew that the poor —— of a human being had gone down, and down, through all the noisome depravities of the far-back and high-up or the out-of-the-way places.

Some remembered him as quite a man years before; but liquor and hunger, the bullying of all the scoundrels who dwelt in that back land, had gradually undermined his will and soul till he was now apparently an object of utter worthlessness and misery, except that he could take a seven-inch contraption with rows of double reeds and, half-closing his eyes, transport himself into such realms of measures and rhythms as silenced the meanest of the jesters and turned the faces of the most conscience-stricken from contemplation of his rags and meanness—while their very souls thrilled to the wild cantilation of his breath of life and the touch of his tongue.

NOW Fretful Center was peaceable. A certain code had long since been stablished there, none knew by what means or by whom. The cowboys rode in without any arms for self-protection; the miners were not fighters; the vagabonds of the high plateaux, as prospectors, trappers, desperadoes even, did not want trouble. They might drink liquor, they might flirt with the girls, and they certainly patronized the several games of chance, regardless of consequences. But no one ever raised his voice in protest or expressed a desire to eat his weight in wildcats. By that, Fretful Center differed from a great many communities which in the old days became famous.

At one time no doubt the office of city marshal was a position that demanded courage and good marksmanship and carried with it a certain position, not to mention salary. Now the job was a joke; and when the mayor, the trustees and the city clerk met they frequently found they had no marshal, despite the fact that it carried a fifteen-dollar wage, a cap, badge, belt and gun—an old-fashioned, real gun at that, a revolver of .45 caliber with the most beautiful blued barrel imaginable. Occasionally marshals had pawned the revolver, for no one ever used such a thing in Fretful Center in these days. But despite this laxity a new gun went to a new incumbent as a matter of habit and possible profit to the local mercantile establishment which dealt in hardware.

May Rand had opened an account in the bank. She astonished the president by placing before him not only some three thousand dollars, but also letters of introduction of the most impeccable character. They claimed for her a certain intellectual and social position—which apparently she was wasting on the Palace of Pleasure. Surely she had no business there—or no business with so much money or such good social standing.

The city board of aldermen met on a Wednesday night, when they smoked from a good box of cigars and transacted any current business, told stories and considered the state of the region, wherein its next great boom would find birth and expansion. They were surprized when May Rand appeared before them.

"Gentlemen," she addressed them, "I understand that you have tonight under consideration the appointment of a city marshal. If I am not too presuming, I should like to suggest that French Harp Bill be placed in this position."

"Well, that's a little too raw a joke!"

The president of the bank shook his head.

"Indeed?" May Rand turned to him. "Why should you regard a suggestion I am willing to make as a matter of such frivolous import?"

"Oh—well—all right!" President Dickman hastened to climb down to the ground. "'Course—I'm willing."

Ten minutes later City Clerk Byrum signed the commission and went over to the store to buy a new revolver, belt, two boxes of ammunition and a large hat with a gilt braid around it. He stopped down-stairs in the city hall and brought out a silver badge, which he wiped off on his coat sleeve, some dust from the plateau having fallen upon it during the past two weeks or so.

"You tell 'im!" the mayor grinned, extending the regalia of office to the young woman.

"Gladly!" she exclaimed with emphasis.

She took the outfit and carried it over to Blue Chip Midlane's Palace of Pleasure. Out in the middle of the gambling-den were a group of relaxing men of the great plateaux and a number of local citizens. Within the circle of these, and of a number of the women, was French Harp Bill. He was, for the edification of the company, pretending that he was a monkey, hopping around as he sat on his heels and holding out his old and battered cap.

At sight of May Rand he suddenly shrank back ever so little, turning his head away. Over his face came an expression of far away and long ago. He drew his music-bar and began to play, rising to his feet in a casual, natural sort of way. He had no other excuse to make, no other reason for living. Worst of all, he was sober and thirsty, famished and without food. He had hoped to win perhaps a dime or two for a sandwich with which to assuage the faintness and ache of privation.

"Excuse me," May Rand said, stepping into the vacant place with him. "I have just come from the meeting of the city board. They appointed me a committee to come to Mr. Bill and inform him of his appointment as city marshal at fifteen dollars a month. Old man—" she addressed French Harp Bill with sudden intensity of feeling that swamped the short yelp of laughter—"old man, they've put a lot of confidence in you! Here is the badge, which I pin to your suspender; here is your hat, which I place upon your head; and here is the revolver with a belt full of ammunition—the power of your office!"

She stepped back. French Harp Bill looked down his gaunt frame, down his ragged, dirty shirt front, and saw that gleam of silver and felt that substantial weight upon his hip, held by a wide, new leather belt. An odd, quivering smile hovered on his lips as he turned suddenly to go outdoors, where the night wind whistled.

May Rand watched him depart, her own features expressing her deep and even tragic interest in the hapless vagabond's reception of what he must have felt to be the last possibility of a worthless life—an appointment to public office.

"What's he to you?"

Blue Chip turned to her, his curiosity showing in his face.

"Great deal," she replied, and no more.

Already the bystanders were turning to

the games, and the rising tide of musical sounds—more or less—from the neighboring dance-hall floor finally scattered the last of the group, the young woman stepping away to jazz with Blue Chip himself, though in an abstracted and mechanical manner.

Hours later, when coffee and sandwiches were being served to the patrons of the Fretful Center Palace of Pleasure, French Harp Bill had not returned to the one warm and sheltering room where he was not unwelcome. Time and again a cry had gone up for him to play his ridiculous but human music, without response. May Rand, merrier than ever and yet with anxiety in the depths of her eyes, drew about her shoulders the marten wrap which she wore, to go out into the starry night.

Overhead were the cloudless stars, winking in the air currents of stinging wind. Around the basin in which Fretful Center had been built was the rim of mountains. The town itself with a few electric street-lamp bulbs stood bare, treeless and bleak in the cold breeze of seven thousand feet of altitude. Even to May Rand with her thick, prime furs the blowing wind was more depressing than stimulating.

As she looked up and down, the wide, dust-rutted street, with drifts of sand dragged out by the wind behind lumps of rock, was wholly bare and deserted. No one was in sight. Her hand sought her throat in anxiety, the sparkle of her rings changing as the nearest street bulb swung like a disordered pendulum on its long, twisted wire in the wind. She went along to the Busy Corner, where the residential street stretched away toward the southward, and looked down this.

There, in mid-road, plodded a man's figure which she instantly recognized as that of French Harp Bill. She caught a glimmer of his badge. She felt a thrill of exultation as she saw his stride, and then one of infinite pity as she saw that he was patrolling the streets of Fretful Center on that bitter night in his shirt sleeves, a ragged waistcoat drawn across his breast and with unmatched shoes on his feet.

He was walking with his head up, with his chest out and his shoulders squared, warmed by a new and glorious spirit that had somehow grown up and out of the rotten dejection and the contemptible degradation of his years of miserable despair. He walked beneath the swinging electric bulb, into the shadow of the plateau desert night; and then she saw that his swinging hands drew up, and when he passed her by, between lights, she heard faintly the exultant strains—and his music always had been full of verve—of some wild marching-song which she had never heard any one play but him, which he called "Stepping Desert Maids."

He had marched up and down those streets, in and out of the alleys and by-paths, for more than three hours.

May Rand slipped around out of his possible sight to the big dance-hall. She rushed through to the kitchen of the restaurant. She gave a sharp order to the white-capped bully who was cook, and who obeyed with alacrity. When the tray was ready with a pint of coffee, juicy roast-beef sandwiches and a quarter of a thick apple pie, she thrust it into the hands of "Happy" Alice, one of the prettier girls, whispered in her ear, threw the furs over the bare shoulders and then slipped around outside to watch the girl hand the city marshal his due.

French Harp Bill was coming down the wind from the corner. He was humping his back, drawing up his thin, wind-cut frame as he resisted the temptation of the sign, with its red-and-white lights which were visible off across the desert for fifty miles, and he was caught by surprize when from the entrance a vision confronted him, with short whiffs of steam whipping over that bowl of fragrance.

He stood looking down at the bright tray for a full minute, while the pert face of the enlisted messenger looked not without appreciation into his face—while in a shadow another girl watched with keener eyes the bearing of the man thus caught in the midst of his trial by such reward as he had not earned in years.

"Thank you—thank you, Alice!" he exclaimed. "I'm—I'm near starved!"

She made a bit of a lee for him with the wide-spread fur coat. He drank half the coffee at a gulp. He ate one of the sandwiches, and then he ate the pie.

"I can't tell you how grateful I am!" he said. "I'll jus' keep this'n for a bit, account of my stomach being too surprized just now!"

He tucked the wrapped bread and meat into his shirt bosom, stood watching the girl as she ran lightly into the big building, and then he went on with his patrol, not so much to guard this outlying border place between bare earth and the high skies, as to work into his own soul something different from anything it had contained in these late vagabond years.

He tramped up and down all night long. He circled clear around the community, beyond the yards and the lot lines, past the débris heaps of tin cans on one side and the spring-wells on the other, and he saw the jack-rabbits and heard the coyotes.

For years he had shivered and cringed, creeping close to the big stove, enduring all contempt, all insult, all bullying that he might have that bit of warmth, that he might at any price obtain a mouthful of sustenance—that he might occasionally drink a glass of bootleg. Now out of the strange fire that somehow was burning in his own soul he was warm with a glow that welcomed the blast from the silvery heights of the rimrocks seven thousand feet above his own proud eminence between earth and sky.

Dawn came, that changeful, varied, ever unique dawn of desert wastes and heights. The fluttering winged flight of pale lights across the sky heralded the approach. Silent darkness ensued, the stately moment of awed breathlessness—and then the majestic ascent of streamers of rose and white pearl, of shafts of golden light, of vast, billowing, voiceless explosions of flaring waves of dancing brilliance, and at last the straight thrust of the sun's crown, radiant in the pathway of vast mountain pass—the King of Day himself.

And alone in the crossroad of Fretful Center stood a gaunt, straight figure of a man, whose footprints had worn a pathway up and down the street during that long night, fighting his fight against the wind and cold, while he made a greater fight against the soft and entangling temptation of the gambling-den and dance-hall. He turned a gaunt, unshaven face toward the rising sun and felt in his wasted frame the quick warmth of the hot rays of light.

Not quite alone, though he did not know that. A woman stood against one of the walls in a recess, wrapped around with a thick fur cloak; her bright blue eyes watched his every motion and took stock of his every gesture. She did not laugh when she saw him draw from his inside waistcoat pocket a long, shimmering, nickel bar and, playing on it, march off down the street out on to the open desert where stood a low, stone shack that some misguided homesteader had built long ago. No, she didn't laugh! When he had disappeared within that hovel den she rushed along the street, dabbing at her eyes with a handkerchief, weeping with a joy greater than ever laugh has known.

SO OFTEN the divine fire of ambition glows brightest at the moment when it goes out, leaving only the charred ember of a lost soul. French Harp Bill glowed thus brightly on that first night of his appointment as city marshal of Fretful Center. Was there fuel within him to keep his light bright? No one knew. Only time could tell. He had stridden up and down all that first night, and a woman sat long that following afternoon with her eyes watching that hovel of stone and clay-chinking out in the bare flat, where shreds of sage-brush betrayed the utterly sterile earth.

At sunset a man came forth, standing straight, but something of a specter, at that. He came striding up the trail to the town over whose lawlessness he had been placed. He must suppress rioting, fighting, robberies and all manner of violence. The fact that no such unseemly disturbances of the peace had been recognized in Fretful Center in many a day in no way prevented him from marching up and down, fully prepared, wearing his gilt-corded hat, his badge, his bright leather belt wrapped around his ragged shirt and waistcoat, with his patched trousers and his mismated shoes, that long six-shooter hanging at his belt in an outflaring fast Cheyenne holster.

Observers smiled those first twilights when French Harp Bill came striding uptown in his official array. The average human being is apt to notice the ridiculous before he notices anything less of the surface. The mayor and the city clerk grinned appreciatively, however. Dickman strolled down to where May Rand was apparently gazing into the plate-glass windows of the mercantile store.

"Say, you know, Miss Rand," he greeted her, "if I'd been picking a wholly worthless and insignificant human mongrel, I don't believe I would have hesitated to choose that man Bill."

"Yes—of course," she admitted.

"I laughed when you suggested him," the mayor went on.

"Yes, I remember."

"You seem to have been right, though."

"I hope so."

She refused to satisfy his curiosity. Indeed, she was paying almost no attention to him but was watching the city marshal as he came in the fading twilight to assume his nightly patrol duty, which was exactly according to the city ordinance specifying the duties of the police officer.

Fretful Center was interested in the way the new marshal attended to his duties. The charity that lies deep in every heart stirred in the people, who now began to take notice of the new man. On dark nights odds and ends began to find their way into that homestead hovel out on the alkali. Old but warm blankets, old but useful cooking-utensils, chunks of meat and small bags of vegetables, bits of cake and pie, and clothes too—a big mackinaw jacket which some tourist had lost off his automobile, long-legged trousers which had been president Dickman's; many things of that sort were laid upon the boxes or thrown upon the bunk where, when he came off duty in the morning sunshine, French Harp Bill found them.

For many a night he never entered the Palace of Pleasure. He did not dare to go into that warm and cloying comfort. The temptation to go in was too bitter a trial as it was. Not even a norther, sweeping down the vast basin, bringing a mile-high cloud of tawny dust, could drive him into that worse jeopardy. Instead of going in to shelter, he strode up and down the streets, stepping to his own music, the weird, wild strains of his jubilant French harp whipping away with the wind. Dressed for it, fed for it, meant for it—paid for it, too—City Marshal Bill stood square and brave for his duty, which was something far and away beyond himself.

Weeks went by—some few months indeed; French Harp Bill had passed the period when he was a curiosity; he was accepted as a fixture; the city board raised his pay to thirty-five dollars a month, when one night he gave the alarm of fire, enabling all hands to come out and save not only the shoe-shop, but all the rest of the town down-wind as well. That was not charity, but fair.

May Rand went occasionally to the Palace of Pleasure, as every one did. There was no particular harm in that. Some nights were special, when not to go would have been a bit queer. But the youngish woman went to work, at first in the big store and then after a time in the bank, where her head for details and figures was useful, if not exactly commonplace.

She met French Harp Bill as he came on duty one evening. She had rather avoided him than otherwise, but clearly there was something between them. She joined him in mid-street at the concourse of traffic on the Busy Corner, where sometimes a prospector's burro outfit, a bunch of cattle on the way to shipment, two or three automobiles and perhaps a train of tourists simultaneously could be seen in the four directions out in the plateau basin.

She talked to him for a few minutes. He stood, his hat in hand, fumbling it as he listened. His head was bowed forward thoughtfully. He strolled up and down that night with less music than usual.

What was on his mind did not appear. But on the following day he broke his routine. He came down-town shortly after ten o'clock and shoved a number of bills, his pay, through the wicket window and received in exchange a deposit book. He stood gazing at the page with blank expression, reading:

WILLIAM CARLTON
Oct. 11 '21 C $ 107

Through the brass grill a keen-eyed girl watched him unnoticed. She heard him whispering to himself:

"To my credit! To my credit!"

What a word that was—*credit!* Probably never before had he given thought to it. Now he rolled it over his tongue—*credit, credit, credit.* He glanced up and saw those blue eyes fixed upon him. He turned away, looked back and then walked slowly out. At the door he glanced over his shoulder perhaps for a bit longer than a mere glance and then plodded off out to the old homestead shack, which had now become his home.

Thereafter twice a month he came to the bank on the pay-day of the city. He put in his $17.50 check; then during the ensuing two weeks he would cash checks as he could not escape the need and use of his *credit*. He did not deny himself good food; and when he bought a pair of shoes they were the best to be had for his purpose—nine-inch laced boots of fine moccasin quality, comfortable, warm and sure-footed.

He who had found it a terrific task to fight his way up and down the streets of his patrol on that first night, walking with or against the wind, now was walking briskly and sometimes breaking into a dog-trot that grew faster and faster. Well nourished, rested, his spirits rising and his strength increasing, he could run from end to end of that long L course and then swing wide around the town as if running in the LO brand, with the L within the O, trotting all the way and coming, his breath slow and even, to the stopping-point at the Busy Corner. He did this in the small hours of the morning when he thought no one was watching; but a man never knows whose eyes are on the lookout.

ONE night in the Palace of Pleasure the machine music had grown stale. A crowd had come in. There seemed to be no tang to the gaiety. No one knew exactly what was wanted. May Rand, prettier than ever and more inscrutable, walked thoughtfully up and down among, but mentally apart from, the others. She strolled impudently to Blue Chip and made a suggestion. He clapped his hands with enthusiasm.

He went off to one side, dragging five or six of his patrons, huskies in the clothes of the range. He whispered in their ears, and they roared with delight. He left them after a time. Immediately the cowboys began to talk louder and louder. Some began to swear in loud and vulgar oaths. There was then pulling, hauling, yells and at last such a tumult and clatter as in many a day had not disturbed the serene entertainment of the Palace of Pleasure. The *smack-smack* of blows resounded, and challenging whoops, oaths and yells grew more emphatic, more earnest.

Doors were thrown open, that the sounds might carry far. Some one ran outside and screamed a shrill, feminine wail of alarm.

Down the street, taking long strides and jumping six feet at a step, appeared the city marshal; and as he dashed into the big hall he shed his mackinaw and raced down through the gambling-den to the corner of the dance-hall, where the wild men were now belaboring one another with the enthusiasm of increasing and earnest conviction.

French Harp Bill grabbed into the struggling mass. He yanked "Happy" Tom and "Ropin' " Pete back with power that sent them spinning and, cuffing one man, threw another down and held the last two apart with his long, sinewy arms. Black eyes, bloody noses and a split ear gave the play a realism that angry tempers made perfect.

"Now hold on!" French Harp Bill said as he planked a flat foot in the chest of Happy Tom, who was coming with indignation to chastise his dearest friend, who had played too hard. "What's this? What you boys doing?"

"That's all right, Bill!" Blue Chip came smiling upon the center of things. "They just wanted you-all to come in, so they started a hurry call. You see——"

"Oh, marshal!" Two of the girls came coyly to the fore. "Won't you please play some music for us so's we can waltz and polka—those old pieces? We haven't had any of your music in so long— Nobody ever hears you, really now, except the coyotes and—and the wild winds!"

City Marshal Bill stood trapped. They wanted him! They had gone to all that elaborate fist-to-eye play in order to bring him into their play! Their delight and good nature were only emphasized by the grinning rough-necks who had submitted their eyes, noses and ears to the smack of joyous fists—the alarm to bring him back!

He feared his own weakness. He was terribly in doubt. He wondered at this thing which was in his heart—joy beyond any he had ever known and dread of that black past which was so intimately connected with this huge pleasure resort, with this merriment and physical comfort.

He glanced around. He saw across from him the girl, May Rand. She met his glance with steadfast, searching gaze. Across that gulf of doubt he shot his question in a look.

"Go on, Bill!" she called to him. "Surely—it'll please them!"

Something in the timbre of her voice penetrated the consciousness of the listening spectators, and except for one or two who for a cry or two added their urgency, the silence was unbroken. They waited, feeling that the man was solving a vital problem of his own, one that meant nothing in comparison, to them.

After a minute he reached into his waistcoat pocket, drew out his French harp with a smile and a preliminary scale, and then began to play such a merry-laughing medley of music as had not in many a day rung through that great space, echoing down from the rafters; and, in fact, never had just such music been played there before. French Harp Bill had returned to the Palace of Pleasure—on his own terms. They needed him; they couldn't really do without him; his music filled a want they now acknowledged by the sudden lift and leap of heart and heels.

He played for them. He even danced as he played, central figure of three circles of human beings, who with hands joined around laughed to the running music of a great joy and merriment. And when the wild romp had ended, Blue Chip Midlane strolled with dignity up to the city marshal and with a smile in the grand manner remarked so that all could hear—

"Well, now, Bill, how about having a drink?"

The spectators felt the maladroitness of the suggestion. They saw on the instant the dilemma of French Harp Bill and City Marshal Bill. May Rand froze, pale-faced, as she stared at the man thus assailed. She held her breath, and with parted lips would have beckoned for the man's attention; but she could make no sound, nor penetrate the obliviousness of his half-back profile. But she saw in his cheek and poise the struggle he was making. Perhaps she even helped him better than she would ever know.

"You have drinks here?" City Marshal Bill inquired with a steel-hard temper in his voice.

Blue Chip Midlane started slightly. He felt the subtle edge in that tone. He stiffened angrily as he realized the condition that now faced him. For an instant he hesitated at his own dilemma, and then with memory of who this fellow had been he said the wrong thing:

"Well, what if I have—liquor—French Harp?"

"Just this," the city marshal replied with a slowness of steadying words. "Just this, Blue Chip: If you have, it's against the law."

"Yeh!" Blue Chip snarled. "Ain't it be'n ever since you come to town, you—you sot?"

"That's so. I do remember I'm a good witness on that myself!" City Marshal Bill Carlton exclaimed briskly. "I'll see——"

He turned to the narrow doorway that led into the wing where stood the casks and barrels and the rows of bottles and jugs on many shelves. Blue Chip stood amazed beyond expression or motion. *French Harp doing this?* He couldn't reconcile the butt of all the ragging and insults with the lank and powerful figure which strode to the door and with a wrenching yank, pulled the feeble lock from its fastenings.

Inside, the door swung back on its hinges. Blue Chip started to rush to the doorway. A figure somehow interposed itself before him.

"Better not!" a sharp, feminine voice exclaimed.

"What— You——"

"Oh, yes, Midlane, me!" May Rand replied, and he hesitated as she continued: "You understand, he's city marshal. This is really his duty——"

"Duty be— Um-m."

A crash beyond the closed door as glass was shattered stopped his retort. He stood doubtful—quailed. He heard the smash as the whole stock of bottles clattered to the floor. Then he heard gurglings as spigots were knocked out, followed by the chug of sodden wood as a certain nobility of impatience smashed in cask and barrel heads. For what seemed a short time in the intensity of the occasion, but which was really nearly half an hour, no move was made without. Then the door of the blind tiger cage swung slowly open.

City Marshal Bill Carlton walked slowly out, broken glass jingling under his feet. He looked back into the wet room, which was draining down through rough planks into the sand beneath. He emerged and closed the door behind him, blinking in the brighter lights of the dance-hall.

He looked around. He saw between him and Blue Chip Midlane a slender, graceful figure, wonderfully expressive in its taut determination and defiance, in an attitude, too, of utter protection as well.

"May! May!" the marshal whispered, half to himself.

She turned and slipped back to his elbow. Now his move had come again. He waited a moment, studying Blue Chip, giving him the opening if he wanted it. The gambler for a minute seemed gathering all his forces for an onslaught of some kind.

French Harp Bill awaited him. For a long time Blue Chip had been defiant. Really, though, in the blind tiger business he had been going a bit too far. He was sensible enough now to know that.

Moreover, he realized that for some time back he had been wondering, even expecting, this very thing. His invitation to French Harp Bill to have a drink had been his effort to break down the growing menace of the city marshal, who was waxing strong out there in the desert winds.

Blue Chip's blazing eyes lost their brighter fire. His gaze dropped as he relaxed. He hesitated as he felt his embarrassment. Without a word French Harp-City Marshal Bill had now taken the upper hand. Blue Chip was a good sport; he sure admired good grit; it was something to be overcome by a regular he-man, too—by another good sport who was shading the law even, letting bygones be bygones.

"Say, Bill!" Blue Chip looked up with a whimsical, acknowledging smile. "Let's have some more music, will you? That last piece was—ah—kind of jangling; hard to keep step to, you know. Will yo'?"

French Harp caught his breath. He had nerved himself for desperate things. He was at the summit of his accumulated forces. To have them suddenly thrown, as it were, against nothing at all, upset him. May Rand clutched his arm with both hands, joyous beyond any measure.

"Not now. Some other time, Chip!" she answered, dragging the official away out into the night of the desert street.

She walked with him down to the busy corner and out to the open beyond the building limits. They stood there together, saying nothing—with nothing particular to say for a time. Some occasions are a bit too wide and deep for words. Deserts at night are something like that. But this was no desolation.

"Bill!" she said after a time. "Do you realize it—you've come back?"

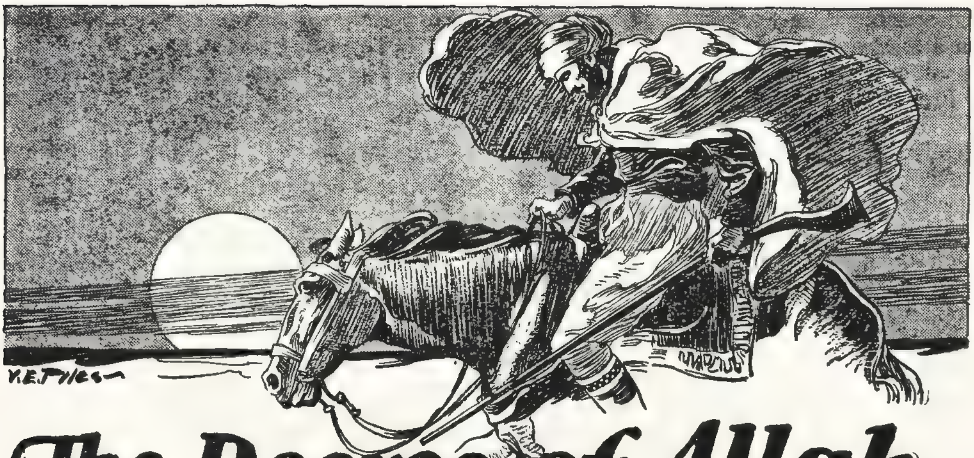
"That's nothing. You came back first, you know!" he sighed, content, adding with a natural masculine curiosity, "How come?"

"Why — I —" she hesitated, for she couldn't tell exactly why herself—"why, you see— Oh, well! Archie—Terry—all those others somehow didn't—couldn't—Pshaw! You know, I believe I missed that absurd music I wanted to hear you play! Could anything be more ridiculous——"

"I don't know!" he chuckled, taking her into his arms. "If it means you love me—for that—for any reason under heaven, I'm——"

"Reason! Reason!" she sniffed. "After what I've been through—reason! But, dear! You're back! And—and I'm back!"

"I ask to know no more!" he whispered. "It drove me mad—losing you! And you came back—and I want to be a man again!"



The Decree of Allah

An Incident in the Affairs of Mohamed Ali

by GEORGE E. HOLT

Author of "The Adventure of the Third Scribe," "The Captive," etc.

MOHAMED ALI, the outlaw, stood upon the brow of a hill near a little village among the "little mountains of the Rif," and intently watched a tiny cloud of dust, no bigger than that reported to Elijah by his servant, which traveled steadily toward him across the flat valley. Eventually the cloud and its cause drew near enough for the watcher to make out the shape of a horse and rider.

A village boy ran by at a little distance and to him Mohamed Ali called.

"*Aiwa, Sidi,*" replied the boy respectfully, and halted.

"Bring me at once, from my house, the glasses that bring distance near."

The boy ran swiftly, pleased at the command, and as swiftly returned, bearing the binoculars.

Mohamed Ali aimed them at the distant rider and adjusted them. The beast plodded along as if each movement was an effort, each tired foot slid a little way through the dust before coming to rest, raising it in yellow puffs which gleamed like topaz smoke in the noonday sun. And the rider sat hunched in his seat, his head nodding, his hands gripping the saddle-hump in front of him.

"*Allah kerim!*" cried Mohamed Ali. "It is Sid Hamed, without doubt. And he rides alone, and as one half-dead."

He strode swiftly to the village, mounted horse and, calling to the big black-bearded captain of guards to follow, spurred off down the hill and raced across the plain. The captain thundered behind him. Almost had they reached the lone rider, when his horse stopped, staggered, swayed and fell, throwing him face downward. He lay as one dead.

Mohamed Ali and the captain swung from their saddles, and bent over the prostrate man, turning him over.

"The first scribe!" exclaimed the captain, as he saw the face.

He dropped to his knees and placed his hand upon the scribe's breast.

"His heart beats; he is not dead!" he cried and looked up into the face of Mohamed Ali.

"But I fear he is not far from it," said he. "Let us take him quickly to the village."

Together they lifted the first scribe to saddle. The captain mounted behind him and, holding the unconscious man by one powerful arm, set off for the village. Mohamed Ali rode ahead. The village reached, an old woman took the first scribe in charge and administered brews looked upon as sovereign remedies by uncounted generations, as a result of which Sid Hamed Mortadi shortly took a deep breath, his eyelids trembled and then opened, and a

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smile of faint surprize and whimsical humor twitched his pale lips, as after looking about the room he noted the concerned face of Mohamed Ali.

"I thought for a little," he murmured, "that I was in *al Jannat al Ferdawa*—the Garden of Paradise—but your presence reassures me."

Mohamed Ali laughed loudly—not so much because of the jest as because of relief, and ventured to return the quip.

"You will no doubt find yourself eventually, hereafter, in *al Hawiyat* instead of *al Jannat al Ferdawa*," he said, his eyes crinkled in a grin.

"Where, no doubt, your presence will again serve to reassure me," retorted the first scribe.

"*Allah!* He is well again," cried Mohamed Ali, and shooed the hovering old woman from the room. Then, turning back to Sid Hamed, he was surprized to find his friend's eyes filled with tears. His own eyes questioned in silence.

"I—I am weak yet," said the first scribe, drawing a swift hand across his face. "And I jested because—because I am weak. Our friend Sid Walid—*he* has looked upon *al Jannat al Ferdawa*——"

"Sid Walid has looked— He has gone?"

"Gone," echoed the first scribe. "In order—" A sob shook him— "In order that *I* might live."

Mohamed Ali sat down upon the cushion beside his friend, and took one of his hands in his own.

"He will dwell forever in the garden of all pleasures, by the fountain Cafur," he said slowly, and his face twitched with pain. "So it is written in the Book."

Time passed in silence, until at last Mohamed Ali, whose face was now set in lines of sorrow, rose.

"Rest you for a while longer," he said. "And then let me learn how it came about."

"The knife of Allal Warzazi," said the scribe, retaining a moment longer the hand of his chief. "He who has been khalifa at Fez—and soon comes to be basha of Tetuan."

"Enough, now," said Mohamed Ali, disengaging his hand. "Later we shall talk."

"Allal Warzazi!" he muttered, as he left the room. "Allal Warzazi—to be basha of Tetuan. He shall be a slave in *El Hotama,* where fires shall eternally feed upon him but shall never consume him."

The sun's coppery disk touched the western horizon. Mohamed Ali spread his prayer-rug upon the ground, and, kneeling upon it with face toward Mecca, made *al moghreb,* the evening prayer.

WHEN Mohamed Ali had been basha of Tangier, Sid Hamed Mortadi, the first scribe, and Sid Walid M'Barak, the second scribe, had been not only his trusted subordinates, but loved friends. When his enemies had gained the upper hand, and he had had to flee hurriedly from Tangier to the safety of the foot-hills of the Rif, the two scribes, with the khalifa, the captain of the guards, and the third scribe, had each sought refuge according to his previous arrangements, there to await until a call for a rendezvous should be sent out by their chief. That call had been made, and one by one the hands of Mohamed Ali had grasped those of his friends in the triple hand-clasp of Islám. In the face of deaths of many sorts they had won through to their chieftain's side.

The first scribe, Sid Hamed, had been rescued from prison in Tangier, where he awaited death, by the mysterious black magician who called himself Master of the *Djinnoon;* and in this Mohamed Ali had been somewhat concerned. For upon a certain unostentatious visit to Tangier he had been of a little assistance to the Master of the *Djinnoon* in some deep intrigue, which that master of craftiness had on hand. When the first scribe at last arrived in Anghera he had a tale to tell that both interested and amused his chief.

Upon a certain night a guard had come to the Tangier prison, demanding to know if there was among the prisoners a man with but one ear. Now the first scribe had but one ear, wherefore he was led into the presence of the basha and a huge black man in whose eyes little lightnings flashed, so that the first scribe became as a man without sense, divulging the hiding place of the things with which he had been entrusted by Mohamed Ali, which was near at hand. He had seen the black magician apparently give the package to the basha. But then oblivion had fallen upon him and he had awakened in the house of the second scribe—far from the basha's palace—to find in the hood of his *sulham* the package which with his own eyes he had seen the black magician give to the basha.

As for the second scribe, Walid M'Barak, in whose house the first scribe had found himself, he had won his way to liberty because, despite his much-proved bravery, he was of delicate physique, with hands and face as delicately fashioned as those of a woman, fair-skinned, and with a woman's eyes. As he was about to leave Tangier, he had been seized and locked up in a room in the basha's palace, and a guard placed at his door.

Through a queer trick of fate, this guard had turned out to be no other than one who, as an orphan boy, had been befriended by the father of the second scribe. This fact alone did not mean that escape from the palace was possible. But the guard conceived a plan, as the result of which the second scribe had arrayed himself in woman's garments, had left his prison room, had coquetted with one of the impressionable palace guards, and in true feminine fashion had caused this guard to lead him in safety through the palace and palace grounds and into the street. There the guard had suddenly found himself bundled head and foot in the five yards of woolen cloth which constituted the second scribe's outer garment—while the second scribe sped through the darkness to safety.

Now Walid M'Barak was dead, and Sid Hamed Mortadi in his weakness wept at his passing. Mohamed Ali did not weep—nor the burly captain, nor the khalifa, nor Mamun, the third scribe. But each had thought of Walid M'Barak when the evening prayers were made—the throat of each had choked a little with pain, as the imagined presence of the second scribe knelt upon his prayer-rug among them and his clear voice pronounced his faith in Allah the Merciful and Compassionate, the true God and ruler of all things. And then the pain was subordinated by powerful wills and strong hearts—and the name of Allal Warzazi, khalifa of Fez, was named. Assuredly Sid Allal had dire need, now, for the impregnable protection of the Mantle of Allah.

"AND so—" The first scribe was speaking from his cushions, telling to Mohamed Ali and his other friends the story of the fatal adventure—"and so we safely reached Fez, to secure from beneath the tile floor of Sid Walid's house the store of gold which he had hidden there against the time of need. It was his thought now to bring it to this village, in the hope that it might serve you—and all of us—against our enemies; that it might aid our return to power.

"Now, the house of Sid Walid, in Fez, belonged to him, but since he had been with us it had been occupied by his cousin and his cousin's family. Thither he went, by night and with care, and found all as we desired—at first. The gold was untouched, nor had Sid Walid's cousin been disturbed by our enemies. One thing only—a little thing it seemed, also, at the time—bothered me. An officer of the city police chanced to be inspecting the guards at the gate as we passed through. Although there was a throng at the gate, it seemed to me that his eyes fell upon us and that his memory was vaguely stirred. I did not turn to look after we had passed, but I seemed to feel his gaze still fastened upon my back.

"However, it appeared such a small thing, that I could not bring myself to think that the officer could have recognized us, although, like a hollow tooth, it bothered me. And so, with no more reason than this, I was restless and desired to complete our mission and get away from the city. Sid Walid harkened to me, and smiled, and agreed that we should do as I desired; that we should depart immediately we had finished the meal which his cousin's wife was preparing in our honor. Even this I tried to avoid, urging that a crust in safety were better than a feast in the shadow of danger. But Sid Walid laughed—*you* know how he could abash one with his laughter!—wherefore we remained.

"Now the store of gold he had divided equally between us, because of its weight. Even then there was enough in my *shakarah* to cause its cord to drag oppressively against my neck-muscles. Twenty pounds, I judged—a small fortune—five or six thousand *duros*——

"We squatted about the dinner table, Sid Walid gay, his cousin courteous and attentive as becomes a host, I—oppressed by vague menace. And when there came a sharp summons on the iron knocker at the door I knew, as surely as I have ever known a thing, that my fears were to be realized. Wherefore I drew my pistol and was about to rise, but Sid Walid laughed again—this time *at* me—and laid a restraining hand upon my arm, so that I sank back and put the pistol away.

" 'Your imagination is too keen, Sid Hamed,' he said. 'Have care that you do not shoot a slave girl, thinking her to be——'

" '*Allah!* The officer!' I could only groan the words. The officer of the guards stood in the archway of the room. Back of him two of his men were visible in the dim light.

"Sid Walid looked, and in the time of a short breath many emotions raced across his face—surprize, chagrin, anger, concern, amusement. But no fear, no panic of the mind.

" 'A queer slave girl,' he said, with a quick glance and smile at me.

"And to the officer:

" 'Our meal is not yet finished. Will you not join us?'

"A grim smile grew upon the face of the officer, and he stepped forward a pace, pistol in hand.

" 'I am on duty, Sid Walid,' he made answer. 'And that duty compels me to take you prisoner at the khalifa's orders.' He came forward farther into the room then, where he could see my face more clearly. 'Ah; it is as I thought—Sid Hamed Mortadi. Two of Mohamed Ali's scribes in one cast of the net.'

"He turned to his guards.

" 'Bind them,' he ordered.

" 'One moment if you will,' said Sid Walid, raising his hand. 'I have here—' he reached slowly, openly, into his *shakarah*, while the finger upon the officer's gun, I knew, was tightening—'I have here quite a sum in gold.' He set the bag upon the table, and it chuckled as only gold can chuckle. 'I would prefer not to be bound.'

" 'Bind them,' ordered the officer again, but not until he had swallowed twice.

" 'A moment more,' I said then. 'I have also—' I brought forth my bag of coins, and set it beside Sid Walid's upon the table— 'I have also gold. There is a fortune here—for an officer of guards—even though he rewarded his men and took them into his service.'

"The two guards looked at each other, and their eyes were covetous. And then they looked at the officer, and greed was in his eyes also. I watched him swallow, gulp almost, and a great relief came upon me. But no sooner had I felt it than it was gone.

" 'Bind them,' for the third time ordered the officer. This amazed me, for his eyes had told a different tale. But suddenly all was made clear. A white figure, which manifestly had been waiting out of sight in the passageway, came through the doorway and stood staring at us with hostile gloating eyes and an evil smile. A short, heavy figure, half-black, with the features of his negro mother.

" 'The khalifa!' murmured Sid Walid. 'Assuredly we are honored.'

"The officer looked at the khalifa, as if for orders.

" 'Bind them,' growled the khalifa.

"Now, as the two *maghaznis* stepped forward to obey the command, there was a moment, while one might blink thrice, that they were between their officer and us. At their first steps I knew that this moment would come—and Sid Walid knew it also. They came toward us, and as the muzzle of the officer's pistol was eclipsed by them Sid Walid, with a swift swing of his arm, knocked over the two tall brass candlesticks which held lights for the table, and threw himself backward upon the floor. A red finger of fire pointed in the darkness, and the air crashed with the report of the officer's pistol. Also there was a scream, but it was not from Sid Walid, wherefore I judged that the officer had shot one of his own men.

"I had my own pistol drawn now, and quickly I fired thrice or four times, but I could not tell whether I had struck or not. Then I felt Sid Walid's hand upon my knee, and heard him whisper:

" 'The iron shutter on the window opens inward. Come.'

"He took my hand and drew me through the darkness.

" 'Lights! Make lights!' the khalifa was bellowing.

"We reached the window, which was tall and narrow, and barred with a net-work of broad bars.

" 'It is always well to have *two* exits from a room,' Sid Walid breathed into my ear, and drew the bars inward.

" 'Lights!' the khalifa was still shouting—and Sid Walid pushed me upward. The window was as high as a man's knee, cut through a wall two feet in thickness.

"Then a match flashed, and I saw one of

the *maghaznis* touching it to the wick of a candle. Also I saw the officer lying face upward upon the floor and knew that one of my shots had found its target. The cousin lay also as one dead——

"But there was little time to observe these matters, for, with a tiger-leap the khalifa crossed the room to us, his *kumiah* in hand. He is a big man, Warzazi, and Sid Walid seemed a child in comparison. He awaited the rush, knife steady, but I was of no mind for such a contest. I raised my pistol, took careful aim at Warzazi's heart, and—the hammer fell upon an empty chamber. Again I cocked the pistol, and pulled the trigger, but it had been no faulty cartridge; the magazine was empty. And now I remembered that I had fired twice or thrice at a jackal on the road, and had not replaced the cartridges—may Allah and Sid Walid forgive me!

"Now this had taken place in a breath—no, I did not breathe, I think—and Sid Walid had heard the double click of the empty pistol. He stepped back one step, as the two *maghaznis* rushed to the khalifa's side—and *Allah!* He swung the iron bars of the window in my face. I heard a snap; I pushed against the bars to get back to his side—they were locked, there was a spring somewhere, they bent under my shoulders, but they held.

"And Sid Walid cried to me:

" 'Go swiftly! And may Allah guard you—' and took a knife in his left arm, while he sank his own *kumiah* into the neck of a *maghazni.*

"Then—then I think that Allah took my senses from me for a little while. I remember that for a thousand years I battered upon the iron grating with the pistol, and with my bare hands; and that for a thousand years I saw a *maghazni* holding Sid Walid's arms from behind; and a thousand years it required for the khalifa to raise his knife above his head and to bring it down into the heart of Sid Walid."

The face of the speaker grayed, and his hands clenched.

"The *maghazni* loosed him, and his knees bent. As he sank he turned toward the window—his eyes sought mine—and his lips formed a word. But before he could utter it, the hand of death swept it away, leaving only a masque of surprize, and he fell, motionless."

"He dwells now in Paradise," murmured Mohamed Ali reverently, and his eyes were wet. "It was the decree of Allah. I am glad, however, that—that I lost but *one* friend thus."

"I think I should have gone back and sought Warzazi and his men and joined Sid Walid speedily," answered the first scribe, "except that a great desire seized me and chilled my blood—the desire, the determination, to avenge our friend. Wherefore I planned to live, though I wished to die. Ah—Walid—Walid!

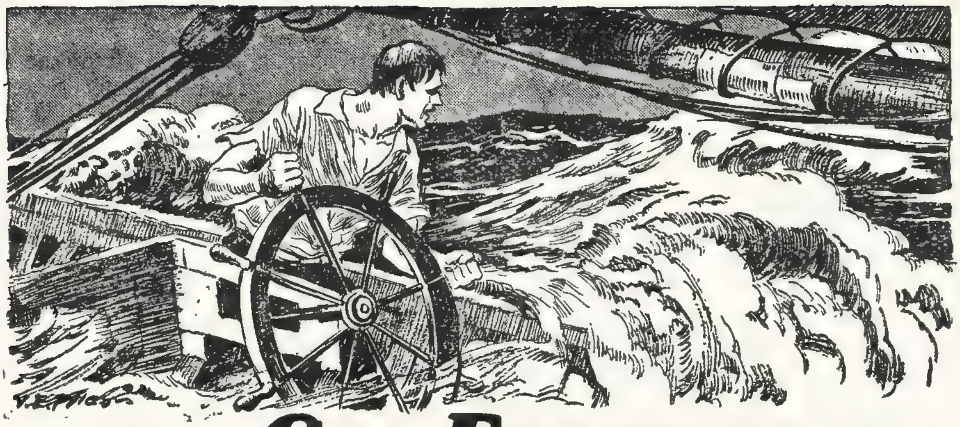
"And so I dropped to the street and found a horse, and rode from the city; but men followed me, and I could not lose them, nor could I stop for food or sleep. This morning only did they give up pursuit, perhaps because so many had fallen exhausted. Allah! what a chase!"

A little silence. Then—

"And the khalifa, Warzazi, is to become basha of Tetuan?" asked Mohamed Ali.

"So Sid Walid's cousin told us."

Mohamed Ali looked slowly into the eyes of his own khalifa, into the eyes of the captain, into those of the scribes. And the same message was clear in every eye. Sid Allal Warzazi, with the knife-stroke which took the life of Sid Walid, had written, signed and sealed the warrant for his own execution, when the time should be propitious.



Go-Fever

A THREE-PART STORY ✦✦ PART II

by J. Allan Dunn

Author of "Jinx," "The Man Who Spoke with the Wind," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

"GOLD!" said the Anzac to the Yankee as they sat on a park bench in San Francisco. "Slathers of gold. Me and my partner Bill would have got it, only seventy-nine Myalls came out of the holes in the lava and chased us with spears. They got Bill. Now I'm looking for another partner to go back with me after it."

"Where'd you say it was?"

"Queensland. Up north in Australia. Headwaters of the Herbert River. Want to take a chance?"

Sergeant Jimmy Cole, late of the A. E. F., would take a chance. He had nothing to lose. In fact, he and his new-found partner, the Australian Reynolds, were so poor they had to wash dishes that night for their dinner and seek lodging in a flop-house, where they got a room for the small price of six-bits and a fight with a husky individual who coveted their quarters.

The proprietor of the flop-house observed the fight with a pleased and appreciative eye. He was a boxing promoter, in a way. Some days later Jimmy Cole, who had been a champion with the A. E. F., was in training for a battle with "Sailor" Shannon.

The fight lasted five rounds. Although it was full of action and blood the gobs in the audience walked out with sour looks. All the money they had bet on the Pride of the Navy was lost, but Sergeant Jimmy Cole had won enough to take him and Reynolds and a third partner they had picked up, Petrie, an artist, to Australia.

They set sail. What they would do for further funds when they got there they hadn't decided, but Petrie was an ingenious chap and they were all in perfect health, except for a strong touch of the world-old adventurer's disease, go-fever.

CHAPTER IV

SYDNEY

REYNOLDS counted out the coins on the bed, one by one. It did not take long for there were not very many of them—six, all told, one of silver and five of copper.

"Two shilling's an' elevenpence," he announced to Cole. "Call it seventy cents."

He tossed the silver half crown into the center of the grimy counterpane and chucked the pennies at it.

"Mrs. Brown nailed me when I came in," he said. "She looked about as amiable as a cat in a mud puddle. Either we come across with room and board tomorrow night, when there's three weeks due, or we walk out and leave our belongings behind us. She ain't a bad old duck and she can't feed us on beef an' pay for it on wind. We owe her ninety bucks an' we've got seventy cents. We can't sneak out on her.

"She must think we are three regular highbinders," said Cole. "Blowing in here with our duffle and our talk of going up north on an exploration trip and then sitting down and eating our heads off at her expense."

"Well, a fellow's *got* to eat. Things ought to be fixed so a chap could always be able to get work enough for living expenses."

"That don't help us any," said Cole. "It was tough luck, my slipping on the deck and setting my wrist back. Tough luck we had to wait over a steamer before Petrie could connect with an animal act. It'll work out, I suppose. It's a joke on us, knowing where there's gold waiting to be picked up or dug out or whatever we'll have to do with it, a fine joke on three huskies who figure on going out into the bush among the cannibals, scared to go downstairs for supper because we don't know how we're goin' to pay for it."

"It'll swing around. It always does, one way or another. There's a sloop for sale, cheap, Tom, that ought to suit us. Belonged to a chap who got drowned in it a month ago. He was washed up on the beach and the boat followed him. The family had it fixed up and want to get rid of it. The man who has charge of it said it ought to fetch a hundred pounds, spite of its reputation, but that we could get it for fifty."

"Two hundred and thirty dollars."

"Round that. Cheaper than steamer fare all right. We'll get Petrie to look it over tomorrow."

"Over what?" demanded Petrie, breezing in through the door, a package under his arm.

"A boat," said Reynolds. "I ran across the very thing, this afternoon. Only fifty quid. All we need is the money."

"Good! We shall acquire the boat—or another one, my braves. The clouds are rolling away. Tomorrow—unless my cunning fails me—we pay our board in chinking sovereigns and win back the smile of Ma Brown. Also the decent cuts and extra cups of coffee. The way she's served us of late has been a bit sketchy."

As he talked he unwrapped his parcel, sketches with which he had been trying for the past week to cajole the art editors of the local newspapers into bidding for his services.

"I've made a stab at almost everything connected with what is crudely gathered together under the name of art," he said airily. "Even to portrait enlargements in crayon and pastel, the retouching of negatives and the illumination of postcards. Once I thought I had landed a job painting wild flowers—very wild flowers—on baskets but the business in 'em languished over night."

"I nearly got a job on a street car this morning," Cole put in. "Only seventy-three ahead of me on the waiting list. Trouble is I haven't any trade. If I was a plumber——"

"That ain't a trade, that's highway robbery," said Reynolds. "But I know what you mean. I never worked at anything. Made some cash demonstrating motor cars, won a good bet at long odds at the races and went up north with Bill prospecting. What's this about paying the board, Petrie. Are you kidding?"

"Not me. I ran into the Sydney chap who was with the camouflage crowd. He's in the advertising game now. Gave me a tip. From the tip an idea has sprung. I introduced into Australia American methods of publicity. They're needed. Look at this."

He took a square package from his pocket—a cake of soap it turned out to be—wrapped in blue paper with the inscription white block letters on a dark blue ground.

SWAN BRAND SOAP

POSITIVELY PURE

The soap itself was oval, white, the same legend stamped on either side. With the air of a conjuror, Petrie partly filled the basin that, with a pitcher and soapdish on a stand, provided the lavatory arrangement of the big room they shared—one double bed and a cot—and placed the cake in the water.

"Observe," he said. "Mark well. The specific gravity of the soap is such that it is only partially submerged. In other words, it swims. Remember that phrase—*It Swims*.

"Now turn to the label. The firm of Swan and Company, growers of copra, manufacturers of rope, matting, fertilizer and soap, was established somewhere about the epoch known as Mid-Victorian. Call it eighteen-fifty. For seventy-odd years they have employed the same methods of manufacture and salesmanship and the Swans have got on swimmingly.

"But, in the last few years, rivals have sprung up and cut into the profits. The grandson of the original Swan sees the light. He determines upon a campaign that will crush the rivals and present the positively pure product before the public in a manner to eclipse all other soaps.

"Only he don't know quite how to go about it. My camouflage pal tells me they are looking for ideas and willing to pay for 'em. *Voilà!* I am seized with inspiration. I will not claim it as entirely original but it is striking, it is new to Australia.

"Did you ever see such chances wasted as there are in this connection. The blamed thing is so close to them that they've overlooked it. Couldn't see the swan for the feathers.

"They call it Swan Brand Soap. They put it up in a package that would suit stove polish just as well; devoid of stimulus or imagination.

"I borrow my friend's studio, or a bit of it, and I produce the following. Observe what it suggests. Cleanliness, purity, grace. Perfect complexions, matchless skins. The refreshment of the bath. The perfume of lilies. Ties up the brand with the name. In a word the ideal trademark. To be used on the packages, in the advertisements, on enormous billboards, as an electric sign!"

He showed a spirited sketch in oils, its wetness protected by strips of cork between the board on which it was painted and a protecting piece of the same size.

A white swan swam in blue water, cleverly blended with the background on which the lettering was shown. The stately fowl seemed admiring its own reflection; water lilies floated about it. It challenged attention. It was the advertisement supreme. Among the lilies, in the foreground, prominent but not unduly conspicuous, was a buoyant cake of the soap. Now you saw that the swan was regarding it rather than its own image. There was a touch of genius about the design. Irresistibly it suggested cool refreshing cleanliness.

The legend was not changed sufficiently to confuse any identification with the former product.

SWAN SOAP
POSITIVELY PURE
IT SWIMS

"I have sold this," said Petrie proudly, "for two hundred and thirty odd simoleons—to be exact, for fifty pounds. I have contracted to produce five billboards on which I have made no price. Tomorrow, when I take in my figures, I collect the money, I purchase a suit of white overalls, I secure carpenters, an assistant to finish the backgrounds—some scene painter out of work. I mount a scaffold and achieve high art. I ought to make five pounds a day out of it for three weeks—ninety pounds more. Fortune has turned its wheel. *Per aspera ad astra*—through soap to gold!

"The joker in it was that I made the sketch before I knew that the soap would float at all. But it does. We can eat tonight with a clear conscience. Now tell me about the boat."

Cole and Reynolds demurred. Both recognized, despite Petrie's enthusiasm, that he was making somewhat of a sacrifice to commercialism or, rather, to the success of the expedition. And it left them out of it. The Anzac in particular lamented that he had put in nothing toward the funds.

"You provide the prize, my son," said Petrie. "Why sell the tickets? I don't see why you two should begrudge me my good luck. There is no especial reason why you should have let me into this thing at all, Tom Reynolds, and Jimmy Cole there has put in more than I have up to date. If either of you were in my shoes you'd be tickled to death to be able to come through with a little necessary cash and, if I kicked, you'd say I was a grouch.

"Now let's meet Ma Brown with the smiling faces of those who can meet their bills. I don't mind Ma Brown so much personally as I do that piking son of hers, Alec. He's a pimply-faced scut. I'd call him a sponge only a sponge is a useful article intimately connected with cleanliness, which Alec Brown is distinctly not. Any more than that bounder pal of his who looks like a badly-bred bulldog."

They laughed at the aptness of the descriptions. Alec Brown was a languid person with a stubby mustache that only emphasized the weakness of his mouth, a liking for brilliantine and sporty clothes, an ambition to become the local champion at snooker pool, all of which he nourished at the expense of his mother. His friend, the man with the face like a surly cur of the flat-nosed variety, was his almost constant companion, frequently sharing room and meals as a guest.

It was generally stated, if not understood, by the boarders that Mart Sievers was a "wise bird" on all matters of racing, prize-fighting, pool, billiards and kindred "sports," being always in the "know." With Alec Brown as his prize "pigeon."

Sievers wore a horseshoe pin almost large enough for a small pony, brilliant with blue and white stones. He affected tight-fitting checks on his big, heavy body. It was rumored that he was the ex-champion of some amateur boxing title. Alec regarded him as a paragon and a hero and the doting mother gave him a dubious welcome for the sake of her boy.

"If that boat is really what we want," Petrie said, "we'll be out of this before the month is over. We'll name her the *Adventurer* and we'll bring her back from Herbert River ballasted with gold. We're off at last, old scouts! Reynolds, have you got any dough at all?"

"We've got seventy cents, all told," said Cole.

"I've got tenpence—that's twenty more. Tonight we'll celebrate. There's a movie on at the Empire called 'The Gold Ship.' Admission one shilling. It's an omen. We'll take it in. Tomorrow, after I've made arrangements and collected the spondulics, we'll go and see this sloop and pay a desposit on it. I know it's going to suit us——"

"There's a hoodoo on it," said Cole. "Owner got drowned."

"And the hoodoo with him. Hoodoos are personal property. Hurry up and let's go down to chow. My appetite's come back again. Last few days the sight of Ma Brown's face has taken it away. It'll be all smiles tomorrow."

But if their landlady, unconscious of the impending switch in their fortunes, was still stony of face, her daughter was more complaisant. She apparently preferred Cole and she did her utmost to get him to talk about America, about himself, in plain endeavor to ultimately turn conversation toward herself and her interest in him.

"There's a new show on tonight at the Empire," she said. "'The Gold Ship.' Do you ever go to movies, Mr. Cole? You don't seem to go out much of nights."

Petrie cocked an eyebrow at Cole across the table. Every one at the Brown ménage sat at the the one long table, waited on by an overtaxed slavey under the severe eyes of the landlady.

"The three of us are going to see it tonight," said Cole shortly.

The girl tossed her head, rebuffed.

"Oh, are you?" she answered. "I'd like to see it myself."

Sievers sat scowling at Cole. It appeared that his frequent visits to his friend's home were not entirely actuated by free meals and for the purpose of maintaining ascendancy over the weaker man. He aspired to the favor of the buxom Amy with her black hair, blue eyes and red cheeks and lips. That she had smiled upon his advances before the advent of the three strangers they could only surmise, but now he was plainly jealous of the Yankee. Cole noticed it with the others and, as he cared nothing about either Sievers or the girl, it added to his annoyance.

"Sounds like it might be all right," said Sievers. "Might take it in. Want to go, Amy?"

"My name is Miss Brown," she snapped at him, her eyes flashing.

"Look 'ere, Amy," started her brother, but she stopped him with a look.

"I don't care for the first night crowds," she said. "People who go to them are not my sort."

She pointedly ignored Cole until the meal was ended and the three went upstairs to their room.

"Amy's making a dead set for you all right, Tom," said Reynolds. "And that faker, Sievers, don't half like it."

Cole laughed it off. Girls were farthest from his thoughts.

"THE GOLD SHIP" proved interesting enough though it was a picture of pirates rather than of discovery. It sent them back in pleasant mood to the boarding-house. It was a walk of three blocks from the tram. There was a public house on the last corner, a knot of loungers outside one of the doors. As the three passed one of them made a remark about the "—— Yanks." The rest laughed coarsely and supplemented the supposed jest according to their more or less fuddled degrees of wit. Petrie turned hotly but Cole, who had him by the arm, urged him on. The group followed them.

"They're a tough bunch of larrikins," said Reynolds. "And that swine Sievers is their leader. Did you see Alec Brown sneaking along in the rear?"

"Good deal of a finale hopper, Alec," said Cole. "No sense in getting into a row, is there? We might get pinched."

"Not many bobbies round here," Reynolds answered.

"Want to take a slug at them?" asked Cole as the epithets grew more personal. "I'm about fed up."

"You're talking," snorted Petrie.

Cole caught the spirit in his voice. It was partly for Petrie's sake that he had ignored the gang. The artist was, he imagined, likely to be soft, not used to a rough and tumble, none too tall. And the odds were easily three to one.

The larrikins closed in and Sievers flung the final insult.

"Too proud to fight, the Yankee ——!"

They wheeled as one, the Anzac with them.

Sievers was right up, in the lead, encouraged by the retreat. He swung a blow at Cole and learned immediately, by practical demonstration, the lesson that the cord of an arc is shorter than the curve. Cole's left jabbed him straight and hard on the nose and the blood spurted.

There was nothing very game about the larrikins. Cole's work with Sievers was short and snappy. The undeceived Sievers went staggering back, well punished with straight punches that landed once again on his none too prominent nose, blackened one eye and took all the wind out of him while his own flailings wasted in air. He stepped unexpectedly off the curbing and tripped himself into the gutter.

Petrie's mode was expeditious and equally effective, learned from long familiarity with San Francisco's Barbary Coast. He kicked his man on the shin and, as the larrikin bent in pain, an uppercut caught him on the chin and he lost all interest. Reynolds charged, slugging, catching one man a clip on the side of the head that sent him reeling, grabbing another by the throat and hammering him hard and fast while the coward whined.

They lined up but the gang had had enough. Alec Brown started to run and the rest followed, Sievers picking himself half-dazed out of the gutter. Petrie's man was still in collapse.

"That was a neat job you did, Petrie," said Cole, gingerly feeling his wrist."

"I got that trick from 'Spider' Kelly. Saw him use it down at Sanguinetti's one night and tried it out. Hurt your wrist again?"

"I don't think so. I didn't spare it though. Suppose this'll make a stink at the boarding-house?"

"All it'll do," said Reynolds, "is to relieve us of Sievers' company until he gets rid of that shiner. Ma Brown is death on Alec if she thinks he's been drinking. After we pay up tomorrow she'll believe our end of it if anything is mentioned. Alec hasn't got the pluck of a rabbit. Soon as he saw his bully downed it was all off."

"He's a virulent little cuss, just the same," said Petrie. "If he didn't have a home and an easy mother he'd be a sneak thief."

"Not him. He ain't got nerve enongh to steal a cat's milk," said Reynolds. "He's just a plain cadger."

"Sievers is the better of the two," Cole adjudged. "He tried to put up a scrap."

"You must have surprized him. I've a notion to leave those San Francisco press clippings of your last scrap somewhere round the house," said Reynolds. "But they ain't worth bothering about, either of 'em."

CHAPTER V

THE GOOD SLOOP *ADVENTURER*

THERE was work to be done on the sloop and Cole and Reynolds were glad to find they could handle a lot of it. She needed painting and they rented a marine railroad, hauled her out and gave her a coat of white paint with non-fouling copper paint for her bottom. They scrubbed her clean and stowed her odds and ends away, polishing what brass there was on her till it shone like gold, revarnishing and doing all that amateurs could do. Petrie, with his superior artistry, painted out her old name and applied the new in gold leaf.

He looked a bit dubiously at her sheets and halyards and showed the pair how to overhaul them, end and end. They had to buy a larger anchor and renew her water-tank. The binnacle compass was gone and there were several things to purchase that made a hole in their little capital. She lacked a dingey, essential for their trip up the Herbert and better bought at the beginning of the voyage than the end.

With provisions aboard and the money reserved for the horses they finally embarked with a margin of spare cash that was negligible. If they failed to locate the gold they would find themselves stranded in northeastern Australia though that difficulty never bothered, hardly occurred to them.

The sun was shining warmly when they sailed, close-hauled, the sloop handling well, out between Minute and Inner South Heads, the Middle Harbor to port. Rounding North Head, they cleared Quarantine Reserve with the boom out-swung, the wind strong over their starboard quarter.

All three were in the cockpit, Perro, the Airedale, curled up at the feet of Petrie who, as skipper, had the wheel. Their route lay clear before them with open sea to the east, to the west the towering heights of the vast cordillera of the Great Dividing Range, running unbroken to the north; a thousand miles of voyaging ahead of them, blue water till they crossed the Tropic of Capricorn and entered the comparatively shallow sea between the mainland and the Great Barrier Reef.

"Not much need of navigation with those mountains to keep in sight," said Cole.

Sailing seemed simple enough to him and Reynolds as they glided easily along with every now and then an outshore tack or two. The one jib carried a short club and handled itself when they came about, a maneuver the *Adventurer* performed smartly. The details of sheet and halyard were easily grasped with Petrie to tell them where to belay the mainsheet or ease it off. The wind was steady, without squalls, the sky blue with wispy clouds in the southeast, the horizon sharp and crystal clear and the range glorious with light and shade.

"I always had an idea that sailing was a mysterious profession. Seems easy enough," he said to Petrie.

"Will be, if this weather holds," said Petrie. "You chaps had better begin to learn how to handle the wheel. It isn't so easy as it seems with a following sea. She's got a trick of trying to turn round and look at you and you've got to be careful she don't jibe. I'll do most of the night work till you chaps get the hang of it; then we'll split into watch and watch.

"There's a spinnaker aboard," he went on. "May be able to use it if the wind stays as it is. I'll initiate you into tying the stops and breaking it out. Then there's the trysail for stiff weather. Have to show you how to set that. Also the gaff topsail. I'll make sailors out of you yet. Right now you don't know how to tie a square knot in a reefpoint or a gasket. Don't know what a gasket is. You'd tie a granny in the painter; you dont know a cleat from a belaying pin. I'm not trying to ride you but you're greenhorns and you'll find plenty of things to learn before we make Halifax Bay.

"Wait till you take a night trick and she starts swinging on you in a light wind. You haven't got your sea-legs yet. There is only one sailor-like attribute about either of you, which I share."

"What's that?"

"None of us can swim. Mighty few seamen can. When they're swept overboard in a heavy sea the chances of picking them up are few and they don't want the ability to fight in the face of a death that grins at them in the white curl of every wave. She's beautiful, the sea, but she can be cruel."

"You can't do all the work, Petrie," said Cole after a while. "Now you're skipper and cook and the best part of the crew. I can handle that stove. I'll get dinner. What'll you have?"

"I can eat anything when I'm afloat," Petrie answered.

"How about you, Tom?"

"Don't bother about me," said Reynolds. "I don't believe I'm hungry."

He mumbled his words a bit and they looked at him, Petrie with a wise glance. The Anzac was pale, his mouth puckered and his cheeks puffed out.

"How about fried ham?" asked Cole innocently enough.

There was a groan from Reynolds as he leaned over the lee rail.

It was the third day before he made his peace with Neptune after much paying of tribute, and a heavy sea always tended to demoralize him, much to his disgust. He fought it valiantly but the sloop was a "quick" ship and the Anzac's stomach was squeamish.

"A fine adventurer I am," he said after a spasm. "They don't do it in the movies or the magazines."

"Try the Coué system," suggested Petrie. "Make peace with your soul."

"I'd risk losing my soul to be able to settle my stomach," groaned Reynolds. "If ever I get you chaps on solid land again I'll punch your heads for kidding me. Even the dog's laughing. Oh——"

The sea-miles slid by them, the panorama of the shore ever changing as they bowled along, hour after hour, toward some distant headland, reached it, pricked it off on the chart and then tacked out to sea again to get weathering. One day they logged a hundred and fifty miles. The breeze never entirely failed though it was often light.

On such occasions, with Reynolds's peevish stomach undisturbed, they passed glorious hours by day and night, chatting sometimes, oftener silent in the true companionship of those who know that their intimate thoughts run in the same channels.

The majesty and mystery of the sea, the peace of it, entered into them. It did not seem so much the fascination of a new adventure as the renewed enjoyment of old experience.

By day they often seemed to be sailing in the center of an azure globe, half-filled with water that was liquid sapphire. The horizon ran in an undulating line of indigo against the arching curve of the sky of unstained blue. The sea was so blue that the finest film of it, as it curved along the run, turned the white of the hull to the color of a robin's egg. The peaks of the Great Dividing Range, the valleys and all the shaded shoulders and buttresses verged toward purple. The intense green of the semitropical verdure seemed to be washed with cobalt.

There was no apparent haze of distance; all was sharp and distinct, the blueness suggesting that they looked through field glasses whose lenses were of that color. Fish leaped and soared, flying fish and the porpoises that pursued them. Two or three times they saw the steamy blow of a whale; once a school of sharks that swam steadily south with their scything backfins clear of the water.

GORGEOUS sunsets flamed and died behind the range, deepening the blues and purples, leaving the peaks the hue of larkspur before they darkened to a loom of purple-black. The sky turned violet-black, soft as velvet, with the burning stars of the southern hemisphere golden and the moon a slim crescent of pearl. The waves matched the sky save where the sea-fire streamed in their wake. Through the warm nights they floated, remote from the world and all its influences, dreaming the waking dreams of clean manhood.

On, till the sky grayed over the tumbling surge, slowly turned to green with cloud-forms that changed chameleonlike from slate to purple, to crimson, to rose before the sun itself peered above the waves and, as if satisfied that the coast was clear, leaped upward while land and sea once more took on its tinge of azure.

"There's nothing like the sea," said Cole one twilight, all three of them, with the dog, in the little cockpit.

It was a flat expression of what he felt, he thought. Petrie gave more dimension to the thought.

"I've often wondered what it was made up the appeal of the sea," said the artist. "And I've thought it was because travel on it brings us into touch with the elemental, we surrender ourselves to the forces of nature and move practically without effort on our part. The solid land has no motion under the foot. We move there by our own exertions — of our own body — that of another earthbound animal—or in some engine of our own contrivance.

"But the sea ebbs and flows serenely in answer to the forces that brought order out of chaos, the air is a part of all space itself.

"I used to feel the same way when they took us up for a flight to show us the effect of our camouflaging the guns. Sea and sky are more vital than the land, they are more dangerous, one imagines himself more daring to venture on them. There is a greater sense of space, of infinity, and you feel closer to the secrets of life and of death."

Neither of the others spoke. Petrie's vocabulary was greater than theirs, but not beyond their understanding. His imagination was more facile, better developed. It halted, gropingly, as he tried to translate the reaction of his innermost self to the surroundings, yet it was illuminating to their mental horizons. As the dark sifted down and the land seemed to retreat, leaving them on the bosom of the deep, tremendously alone, they felt the true exhilaration of the audacious, a measure of self-reliance in their intrepidity, a sense that they were being tested, tempered in the forge of the universe.

Aft, the Southern Cross glowed, lopsidedly brilliant. Ahead, as Petrie gave the word "a-lee" and Reynolds jumped to the mainsheet while Cole tended the jib, the wide Pacific rolled, ancient in its bed, undisturbed by the swift march of men from cradle to the grave, from Babylon to the desert, from ancient Rome to modern Manhattan.

The *Adventurer*, with its spoon bow, its clean lines of entry and run, never logged more than eight knots, even with the wind fairly aft, the spinnaker set and the mainsail winged out to balance it. The chart showed that they were bucking the Australian current, flowing southward, down between the Great Barrier Reef and the land, in a stream sixty miles wide. Yet they calculated that they were beating steamer time with all its haltings along the coast, and they would not have traded their forty foot of overall for any engine-driven craft. Here they set helm and canvas in nice balance to sea and wind and every knot was won by their own success.

They browned and hardened, gradually discarding clothes until they lived only in their knee-length drawers until the nightfalls of temperature demanded more covering. For the time they were absolutely carefree, gathering strength and increased hardihood, their spirits spontaneously high.

At the end of the week they sailed into Brisbane for fresh water and provisions to enliven their canned goods. Triumphantly they made their first port, sailing through the southern entrance of Moreton Bay, crossing the sandbars where the sea broke trickily, watching the mangrove forests of the Brisbane River as the setting sun, a crimson disc snared in a purple veil, shone on the glossy thickets that seemed so typically tropical.

They were out by sunrise on the tide, heading north again. Past Sandy Isle and Sandy Cape. Four days of lighter winds and past the Tropic of Capricorn though they did not know when they crossed it.

The highlands were their guide for longitude, of latitude they knew nothing by observation. Their chart showed them the imaginary line striking the coast a little below the Fitzroy River that led to Rockhampton. They did not make a landing. A coast steamer coming out, hailed them and told them the name of the port; crew and passengers crowding to watch the little sloop as she sailed within a biscuit's throw, giving a cheer for "good voyage." The captain megaphoned them a friendly warning from the bridge.

"Weather's changing. Better watch your barometer."

"We haven't got one," said Petrie to the other. "I wouldn't know much about it if we had. I reckon its good advice though it doesn't look much like dirty weather. Wind's been shifting farther south all afternoon. Best to be on the lookout; we don't want to get caught in a monsoon gale."

Now, for the first time, they began to have some qualms as to their seamanship, but all that wore off as little seemed to happen. The breeze became fitful, working round farther to the west, the sea appeared to be rising but the sloop made good weather of it. The wind was blowing gustily over their port quarter forcing them to more frequent inshore tacks.

"I don't want to run any chance of getting in too close toward the shore," Petrie announced at supper. "We don't know how the reefs run out and, from now on, the water shallows. At the same time we don't want to get outside the Great Barrier Reef though the chart shows there are plenty of channels through it. But they will be hard to work through if the weather is nasty. Cole, will you take the eight to midnight trick and I'll relieve you. I'll bunk in the cockpit. If this sea keeps getting up Reynolds will be on the sick list again.

The Anzac was below when he spoke. He came up the ladder in a little while with the moldy tinge of seasickness beginning to show despite his tan.

"Going to be rough?" he asked.

"I wouldn't wonder," said Petrie. "Better turn in, old chap."

"I'll stick it out on deck. More air. Misty over the land, ain't it? Want to put in a reef?"

Petrie looked at the land with a look of anxious responsibility. The peaks were vague, with the sun lowering toward them in a bank of vapor. The horizon was no longer crisply outlined. There seemed a touch of cold in the wind and the sea had lost all blueness in its choppy waves that broke uneasily, beginning to pound against the bows with the noise of great drums.

"We'll snug down," he said. "Best be on the safe side."

They lowered the gaff and put in a double row of reef points. Darkness came swooping down upon them swiftly. The stars were no longer golden but hazy points that presently were hidden by a lowering scud. Under the diminished sail the sloop seemed to gather speed as the breeze came strongly off the land, beginning to sing in the stays and halyards.

The *Adventurer* heeled to it and the rushing water seethed along the lee rail, ghostly gray, hissing through the scupper clearances. The bows slapped and drummed and the wheel jerked in the cross-seas. Cole made supper which Reynolds refused, swearing at his own weakness, beaten by increasing nausea. The dog set his paws on the weather seat of the cockpit and sniffed uneasily, looking at his master.

Petrie sent her driving to sea with the boom well out, surging along for almost an hour, then tacked, Cole handling both sheets. They came in, listening for the sound of breakers anxiously, tacking again and zeeing it northward. When Petrie got the wheel at midnight scud was beginning to fly in horizontal flakes. There were faint greenish gleams in the waves that rose beyond the rail, each seeming to overlook its forerunner.

The wheel bucked, and the sloop, running before the wind called for constant humoring as it lunged down the valleys and climbed the dark billows, the jib fluttering when the mainsail blanketed it as if the sloop was shaking its head against a bridle. It was no easy job to keep to the course by the shifting needle and there was always the fear of a jibe when a cross sea threw the boat off with a vicious, booming slap.

The little dingey was lashed down. Water swashed in the cockpit as a wave slung itself over the weather rail. Cole lay curled up in oilskins, the dog between him and Reynolds, sprawled under the narrow seat aft.

Morning broke sullenly and reluctantly. They were on an inshore tack, close in, leed from the full rigor of the wind that was now mounting to a gale. There was no contour to the land; it rose like a great wall with a gray streak of lashing foam at its base.

Out and in—out and in—they thrashed back and forth through the morning. Reynolds managed to get below and turn in after Cole helped him into dry clothes. There were deep hollows under his eyes; he had lost his voice and his whole face was pinched and haggard. All vitality seemed to have gone out of him.

Petrie looked anxiously at the mainsail as the sloop careened to the screaming gusts. Then the lee rail would barely show. A stream of water actually topped it, at once forced up above its level and prevented from coming inboard by the speed of the sloop.

It was impossible for the two of them to set the storm trysail. One man could not handle the mainsail or set the smaller canvas—one man had to be at the wheel using at times all his strength. Rain began to fall, streaming down in bulk. Despite the fact that they were practically in the tropics, the lack of warm food, the constant strain, lowered their vitality until they shook with the cold and their fingers clamping round the wheel spokes stiffened like hooks.

They gained a new respect and regard for the sloop. Again and again she bowed before a furious blast that went shrieking by, roaring in the hollow of the sail and again and again it seemed as if she must roll over. But the sail area—reefed as it was—and the depth and weight of her fin keel, were nicely balanced by her designer. The wind spilled out of the canvas at the critical moment and she righted herself, staggering, shaking, plunging on desperately.

In the middle of the afternoon, sky and sea the color of lead, the sun a wraith, a sudden change came with the wind veering suddenly to the west. It came with a burst that buried the boom deep in a wave. Cole was at the wheel and he held his breath lest the stick be snapped like a carrot. The sloop struggled like a live thing and he had to head her off before the wind which sent her shuddering and leaping through the troughs.

Petrie, who was below, wrestling with the lashed stove, trying to make coffee and warm up some hash, came bounding on deck. The sky seemed dissolving into flying clouds, like smoke from damp fires, piling up into heaps that lost their shape momentarily. The wind came with a steady roar, scything the crests of the angry seas with a sweeping onslaught of rain, so close and fast and hard in its fall that it looked like a shower of steel wires, stabbing the water. Cole's face was wet and stinging with spray; he could hardly see while the force of the bellowing gale made him crouch at the gale wheel.

Its buffeting impetus was terrific, blowing the shouted words from Petrie's lips, close to Cole's straining ear.

"Got to run for it. Can't handle the sheet. Pray God it holds."

It took the two of them to steady the

wheel. The wind was blinding. The spume dashed into their faces and the wildly convulsed billows boomed against the stout sides of the little vessel that now seemed to skim the welter of water, now seemed to stop, shuddering, as if the task was too much to be asked of mere timber, but gathered way and raced on.

The voices of furious giants seemed to bellow and roar at them, howling and shrieking, wrenching at mast and boom, thudding mighty blows of invisible hands into the sail, pounding at the hull. The seething waves lofted to prodigious heights, lifting the sloop, curling high above the taffrail while she fled like an affrighted thing through the boiling tumult.

WHILE the waves were crestless, shorn of foam, big flakes of it were driven like snow at nightfall in the increasing gloom. There was no longer any lee rail, from the coaming of the hatchway down, all was a swirl of water. They dared not attempt to come about. They acted automatically, doing what they could to steady her, watching the mast bend like a whip, the action of invisible fingers feeling along the folds of the reeved sail, fearful they would break loose and the canvas go thundering away.

Petrie crept forward while Cole strove with the wheel. Somehow he managed to get a rope from stays to the boom, steadying it against the swash of seas that broke in confusion where current and wind opposed—if that was the reason for the confusion of the gray, liquid hillsides that reared and flung themselves about like monsters in agony. The dog had been left below, the slide shut. Sometimes, in a tiny lull, they heard him howl, thinking himself deserted.

"Got to loosen those halyards, too," Petrie said when he came back into the cockpit, soaking wet despite his oilskins. "They've tautened with the wet and something'll give."

Once more he went at it, up to his waist in rushing water, struggling with the lines whose spare coils hung in a tangle from the cleats.

Night came stealthily, so darkly had the day ended; the sun melted out while still high. Perils were magnified. They came unseen, with sound and motion, with spouts of water from sea and sky, with bursts of wind that flattened them against the wheel as they clung to it, gasping for breath with lungs that could not be filled—two blind figures in the blackness, struggling and striving to avert the end that seemed inevitable, using intelligences and strength quickened by the emergency, summoning up old instincts with which to fight the sea that had been so friendly, so alluring and now appeared possessed of a fiendish desire to destroy.

As the night wore on, weary though they were, there came to them a certain sense of efficiency if not of victory. For all its blustering turmoil, its dynamic might and fury, the storm had not smashed them. The sloop had seemed so small as it mounted the gigantic surges, their own efforts so puny, so devoid of experience; but they had survived so far though they were tiring, obliged to spell each other for shorter and shorter tricks.

The waves came ravening at them, seen in the phosphorescent gleam as they mounted alongside, lifting the sloop, seeming to shoulder and hustle it in cooperation with the winds that swooped now on one side, now on the other, seeking for a chance to outwit the slant of helm and sail, set in balance that called for instant and constant adjustment.

There was some whisky aboard. Cole used it for the prostrate Reynolds, clinging to the sideboard of his bunk below, braced with his knees against being flung out in the wild pitch and toss, wishing that he could die, wracked in the anguish of cramp and spasm, the mental torture of knowing himself unfit in time of stress, striving time after time to stand, to go on deck, and succumbing to sheer weakness, a species of paralysis that left him like an unwound clock.

The whisky helped to keep life in him, to keep his pulse beating, stimulate circulation and prevent the quenching of the vital spark that threatened to go out without the breath of the will-to-live upon it.

Later the liquor kept Petrie and Cole going. Apparently it had no effect upon them, but really it offset the debilitating influence of the storm and, for a time, it served for meat and drink, even for sleep.

There was some slight abatement toward dawn or the growing light made the situation seem more hopeful as, with eyes that smarted from wind and spray, they saw the sloop still buoyant, setting them example.

"She's easing up," called Petrie, his voice a croak, the flesh of face and hands wrinkled from the wet. "Keep her goin' an' I'll rustle grub."

He pushed back the slide of the hatch, opened the doors at the head of the companionway and disappeared. In a moment his head showed again at the top of the ladder.

"Reynolds looks bad to me," he said. "Bilge water's soaked him through. Any more whisky?"

"Some in the locker to the left of the stairs as you go down," said Cole, struggling with the wheel against a series of especially heavy seas as a man might strive to hold a bull by the horns.

He wondered whether any one ever died of seasickness and supposed a man might if he had a weak heart. He imagined that Reynold's heart was strong enough. If he died, what would they do with his body? Bury it at sea?

And where were they? There had been no thought of logging. For fifteen hours they had been blown at headlong speed off the land. Probably a little north at the beginning and more through the night for the wind had again veered southward. As soon as Petrie came on deck they would have to tack. Meanwhile he let the boat swing until the wind was due aft again. Northing they had to make, he supposed, and wait for calmer weather to work through one of the reef channels.

There was nothing to indicate land. The light was diffused and wan, the east merely suggested by a hint of sun that seemed to be some thirty degrees above the tumbling horizon. All about them was a waste of weltering, eddying water. Storm wrack flew overhead. Cole was so tired and weary that he could not herd his thoughts; he ached dully all over, and his hands, gripping the wheel, had no more feeling than if they had been mechanical appendages that did not work very well, being too stiff in the joints.

It seemed hours before Petrie appeared again, shouldering his way up the ladder, bearing two smoking cups of coffee. The wind blew all aroma away, but the sight of the steaming liquid made Cole's stomach twitch.

"Got some into Reynolds, with some whisky," Petrie shouted to top the boom and crash of the surge, the harsh whistle of the wind. "Mug up, old scout! Got the stove going and a pan of hash tied down, warming up. Give me the wheel. My fingers are limbered."

The warm stuff was immediately potent. They gulped it down eagerly, seeming to be instantly given new life, a renewal of courage.

"Beats the whisky," said Cole.

"Got no comeback. All the same, if this was a prohibition ship we'd have been food for fish before this. Coffee's all right when you can get to make it, but this is the first chance I've had to stand up in the galley and get at the stove. Hop down and get the hash, will you? We've gone through the worst of it, though the good Lord knows where we are."

They ate the hash with their fingers, swallowing it avidly as their engines responded to the needed fuel. Reynolds turned his face away at the thought of it, but he was plainly better, though his skin was blotched and livid, his hands deathly cold. Pitched about in the cabin, Cole managed to get some dry woolens out of a locker and he stripped the Anzac's limp form, rubbing it hard with a rough towel before he got the things on him. Then he went on deck and reported to Petrie.

"Fine. The sun's trying to break through. Take time for the sea to go down but we'll be in fair weather before nightfall. One of us has got to get to sleep, Jimmy. Match you for it. Four hours spell."

Cole fumbled up a coin from his pocket. Petrie called heads and lost.

"Take the pup with you," he said. "I'll send him down."

All the curl was out of Perro's shaggy coat. He was a wobegone object crawling out from under the seat that ran around the cockpit. But his eyes were bright as he regarded his master and his shaggy stump of a tail wagged. He had his share of the hash. Cole coaxed him to curl up with him in the bunk opposite to Reynolds.

IN AN instant he lost consciousness. In an instant, it seemed, he was wide awake again, a harsh tearing sound in his ears. He leaped on deck and found that the sun was shining nearly overhead through broken masses of clouds. Everything seemed all right save for the anxious look on Petrie's face. Then he saw that the mainsail had split, almost in the middle, the seams parted from reefed boom to gaff, the torn edges open to the wind.

"What'll I do?" he asked.

Petrie shook his head.

"Nothing right now. Lucky it stuck out the night. I think the reefs'll stay in. We'll get her down when it calms a bit. Rig a sea-anchor and set the trysail. But we'll have to keep as we are. Don't believe we'd come about if we tried an inshore tack. How's Reynolds?"

"I came up in too big of a hurry to look."

"All right, I'll see to him before I turn in."

The wind moderated and the sky cleared during the afternoon. Sunset was a gorgeous thing. They were too far off the land to distinguish clouds from mountains and the wine-colored sea was still too heavy for them to try to go about with their damaged canvas and make for shore though the breeze was swinging between south and southeast, inclining to favor them. It was warm and they were all in dry clothes again, with food in their stomachs, even in Reynolds', who made shift to nibble some hardtack. Temporarily all the ambition was out of him. He had not realized the hazards they had been through, being too miserable for consciousness of anything but his own condition. Petrie and Cole killed his attempt to get up and left him with Perro for company while they held consultation on deck.

"I don't know how far we may be from the reef," said Petrie. "I don't know what it looks like. May be breakers roaring over it at low tide and there may not be. I used to have an idea that a reef was a sort of wall built up by the coral polyps, but now I know that reefs may be miles in width with either shallows or deep gulfs on one or both sides. The Great Barrier is twenty miles and more across, according to the chart, and I don't want to chance approaching it from seaward unless it's full daylight and the water is calm enough for one of us to go to the spreaders and pick out the shoals and the channel from aloft. We won't be able to know one channel from another and we'll have to go carefully and be sure they make right through.

"Perhaps we'd better hold on as we are, keeping the wind aft. Soon as day breaks we'll get off the mainsail and set the trysail. We'll have to make the rest of the trip under that and the jib unless we can use the spinnaker in a wing-and-wing rig."

"Take us a little longer, that's all."

"No, it's not all, Jimmy. There's a leak in that water-tank. Straining must have started it somehow. I reckon we're all of a hundred and fifty miles from land, shortest distance. Two hundred, probably, way we'll have to go. Almost certain to take two days at the least—may take a week. And there's the reef. And we haven't got more than a quart of fresh water aboard, counting coffee as water. There are half a bottle of whisky and three bottles of ale. I should have had that tank overhauled but it's way aft in the lazaret under the cockpit in a galvanized zinc container that fits into a wooden box. It may have cracked, it may have rusted—the fact is that it's empty."

"If we're that far out, why not make for the reef and chance it?"

Cole's face was serious. He knew what it was to be thirsty in the trenches. He could imagine what it would be like under the blazing sun that seemed likely to follow the storm. It was hard luck. Thousands of gallons of rain must have fallen on them during the gale and they could have conserved some of it. Now—a bottle of ale apiece and the cold coffee for the dog, with perhaps a week ahead of them—if they could last that long. They couldn't!

"Too big a risk, old man. Suppose we don't go about and get rolling in the troughs. Suppose we make it this once and find we're close on the reef before we know it. If the wind was offshore we'd hear breakers in time, I suppose. But it ain't blowing that way. There's no moon and the sea may not go down. Suppose we tried to come about again and couldn't? That 'ud mean the reef—and shark meat. I don't fancy going out that way. You can't swim on top of a reef, no matter how good you are. Get smashed and cut on the coral, rolled over and over.

"I don't think I'm losing my nerve but I'm learning how much I don't know about handling a boat. We'll keep on, Cole, till daylight. Sea'll be better and we'll get a glimpse of the land to get some idea of our bearings. You turn in and I'll call you. Let Reynolds sleep. Longer he does the less he'll want to drink."

"All right," said Cole. "Don't forget to call me."

He turned in and immediately thirst began to torment him. He had not been conscious of needing a drink until Petrie had mentioned the word. Now it seemed that his tongue stuck to the sides of his mouth and, try as he would, the obsession fought him, tortured him. There was an actual voice inside talking to him, even while he fought against listening to it, marshaling reason, loyalty, to silence it.

"Just a swig. One swig and then go to sleep. You'll be no good if you don't sleep."

Somehow or other he drowsed off to restless dreams of running water induced by the wash of the sea, dreams of crystal brooks that turned to nightmares as he became half-conscious again, his throat parched, his mouth seemingly stuffed with smoldering cotton wool and knew that the slosh and murmur was all brine. A line came into his head, insistent, repeating itself over and over.

Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink.

It was hot in the cabin as he tossed about, railing at himself for lack of endurance, of will power to dismiss the suggestion. There was Reynolds, blissfully snoring.

A quart of water and three bottles of ale.
For a good long drink of something I would gladly go to jail.

That had been Reynolds' trick, rhyming like that, the night he dreamed over his plight with Bill in the bush; the night Cole made up his mind to go after the gold. What was it Reynolds had said? His tired brain persisted in striving to remember the jingle. If he could get it he'd go to sleep.

No grub, no gold, no water,

That wasn't it. Suddenly it clicked into recollection.

No grub, no water, no gold, no shade,
What would I give for a lemonade?

Lemonade! Iced! "Oh, lord," he groaned, and Reynolds stirred. Cole lay still as a scared mouse. Mustn't scare old Reynolds up. All in. He'd wake feverish.

He began to call himself names—a piker, a fine adventurer. Whining for water, before he was really thirsty.

The next thing he knew was Petrie softly calling his name. He went on deck. The night was fair with stars spangling the heavens and the sea moderating under a cool breeze.

"I can make it all night if you want to sleep, Cole," said the artist. "I'm not a bit sleepy. She's steering fine. I promised to call you, so I did, but I'd just as soon stay on deck."

"I'd have punched your head if you didn't," growled Cole.

The wind refreshed him like a bath. He wasn't thirsty. The beauty of the night reassured him. They were making fair speed though they spilled wind through the rent sail. The waves were alight with myriads of starlike forms that rose and broke in golden gushes.

He took the wheel and held the course. Once it seemed to him he heard breakers booming, though the wind was still in the same quarter. He strained his eyes but failed to distinguish anything like foam. The *Adventurer* rode buoyantly. The little clock in the cabin chimed away the hours and half-hours. Perro came out of the cabin, stretched himself, yawned, licked Cole's hand and curled up in the cockpit.

Eight bells sounded. There was a wan light in the east, slowly spreading. It was time to call Petrie but he did not move from the wheel, watching the growing glory of the dawn. As the light strengthened it seemed to put a spell on the sea. The sun came surging up over the horizon and some fish leaped alongside.

Westward there was a dull loom of something that was surely land. And again there came the dull boom of breaking water. Perro uncurled and nosed him. The dog's muzzle was dry and he looked up expectantly.

"You'll get coffee, my lad," said Cole. "A sip of ale for me."

With the land in evidence, the peril of thirst did not seem the grisly phantom of the night before. They could get the mainsail down and the trysail set and then head in for the reef. The wheel was close enough to the companionway for him to stand between the two with one hand on a spoke and call Petrie. It was Reynolds who answered.

"That you, Cole? I'm feeling pretty fit. I'll be up soon as I've had a drink. Let Petrie snooze. Believe I'll tackle some ale. Tone me up."

Cole couldn't let Reynolds drain one of those precious bottles. He didn't know about the shortage.

"Got to get Petrie up," he said. "We're getting close to the reef. Current must have set us in during the night. Forget the ale. I've got something to show you if you are good enough to turn out."

Reynolds came up the ladder, looking as if he had just come out of the hospital. But there was luster in his eyes.

"What's the idea?" he asked huskily. "My throat's like a Fresno road."

Cole told him of the calamity. Reynolds looked solemn.

"I'll sell my soul for a drink," he confessed. "That land looks a thousand miles away. But I guess I can stand it. That sun's good to me right now. I'm going to play lizard for a bit."

He stretched out in the warm rays that soon would begin to drain him of all superfluous moisture. Cole started to warn him, then reflected that Reynolds knew more about thirst than either of them. And he had taken the news gamely.

The sun, Cole knew, was a powerful restorative for lost vitality. He had welcomed it himself many a day after a week of soaking in the trenches, stretched out like a lizard behind the sandbags.

Petrie came up, sniffing the air, looking at the sea. Cole told him of the booming sound and Petrie swarmed the mast to the spreaders, looking toward the far off shore, no longer to be mistaken, a visible goal to be fought for and yearned after. There were rivers there, wasting precious water to the sea. Water, far more precious now than gold.

Petrie came down, a smile on his face.

"It's the Great Barrier Reef all right," he said. "How's Reynolds?"

Reynolds waved a hand. Petrie went and stooped down by him.

"Think you can handle the wheel for a few minutes?" he asked. "Keep her from falling off when we chuck her up in the wind? Then we won't have to monkey rigging a sea-anchor. Time's apt to be precious. Cole told you about the water?"

"Sure I can do it."

There were dark rings under Reynolds' eyes and his cheeks were hollow, but already he looked less like a corpse and more like a man who was going to live. Petrie threw the sloop up into the wind, they sheeted home, lowered the gaff and managed to strip off the torn mainsail and gasket it until they could stow it below. It was not an easy job. The ropes were stiff and the knots hard to get apart. The gaff stick was dispensed with and a halyard bent to the clew of the trysail, the canvas secured to the hoops and up went the triangular sail. Petrie took the wheel again while Cole held over the jib and Reynolds sat exhausted.

The sloop paid off, gathered way and headed up for the reef while Cole went below, cast off the round hatch forward and stowed the mainsail in the forepeak, the gaff in the cabin.

The sun was mounting fast. Work had temporarily eliminated personal needs but now hunger claimed them and the prospect of a dry breakfast was not inviting.

"There are half a dozen cans of tomatoes left," said Reynolds, "or there were when I passed out. How about it? Help to wash things down. The purp can have a real drink."

The three cans were a godsend, three more would take them through the day. It was getting hot and Petrie recommended occasional sousings with a deck bucket to offset evaporation. Perro, his brown eyes wondering at his scanty ration, curled up in the shade of a seat and the three stripped down to their drawers. Reynolds recuperated astoundingly.

"Just the same I'm going back overland," he said. "Cart, saddle or train for me. I'm no small boat sailor. I'll carry my gold in a trunk."

His small jests announced his continued improvement and he stayed on deck. Their sousings crusted them after a while with crystals but it refreshed them from time to time as did the increasing sound of surf. By noon they could see low seas cresting over a wide expanse. Apparently there was no opening and Petrie mounted to the spreaders again as they tacked and coasted along the barrier. For almost an hour he remained there, full in the sun, his eyes shielded against the glare. At last he croaked down to them.

Reynolds took the spokes while Cole went to the foot of the mast. He was thirsty and his lips were gummy with little balls of sweat and salt but he forgot it as he saw Petrie trying to speak audibly and intelligently. It was a good thing there were the three of them, he thought. One bucked up the other by his pluck. Alone a man, would suffer far more, despair more readily, give way to the temptation to swallow what was left. The three bottles of ale had asserted their existence strongly in the last hour, but they remained untouched.

"Think we can make it," Petrie called down hoarsely. "Looks like clear passage. Keep her as she is till I come down."

Fifteen minutes later he slid down the halyard and came wearily aft.

"Better have some tomatoes," suggested Cole.

Petrie nodded.

"Split one can," he managed.

Cole dived below and opened it. They let the cooling, refreshing pulp stay in their mouths as long as possible before they swallowed it. Petrie had the helm, edging into the reef with its rolling ground swell lifting them high, watching for the opening he had seen aloft.

"Shaped like a Z," he told them. "Looks like a fair channel. Shallows at the other end a bit, by the color, but it's the wind I'm worrying about."

THE breeze was growing fitful and their lessened canvas bothered them as they made long tacks up the green lane with water creaming over coral ledges to either side. The channel was alive with fishes darting like streaks of light, of every metallic hue. There were less than two fathoms under them by the lead, but the tide was still rising and it aided them.

Quartering and reaching they worked into the last angle of the passage, clawing into the lessening, fitful gusts while the water shallowed — shallowed — until they scraped ominously, hung with flopping canvas and stuck, the tide swinging them across the passage. The wind gone, even a flooding tide left them liable to being badly bumped, scraped, driven on the sharp banks. The sun poured down in molten flood, sapping their spirits as well as their strength.

"Stuck!" said Reynolds.

"Not yet. We'll try the dingey. Daren't try and rock her off. I'm afraid we're near the top of the tide," cried Petrie. "We'll put the kedge in the boat. Come on, Cole, we're not licked yet."

His lips were blistering and cracking and his voice was a whisper. Cole was in little better plight. But Reynolds lacked muscular strength and the two tumbled into the dingey with a tow line and the anchor. They tugged at the oars and straightened out the sloop in the channel but she would not budge ahead. In the devouring heat they landed on the slippery coral, knee deep in sucking wash, stumbling through pools, setting the kedge flukes deep in a crevice. Back aboard, they got the bit end of the line about the little windlass and shoved in the capstan bars, heaving and hauling until the muscles threatened to break loose, dripping with the ill-spared moisture of their sweat, striving through exhaustion until they felt her shudder, grip again, slide on and launch once more.

The wind was gone now. The last of the flood rolled over the spumy ledges and the sloop drifted until they manned the dingey and, with Reynolds steering, Perro essaying futile barks from the bows, they broke their backs towing, towing, every stroke taxing the remnants of their strength until they floated dead beat into swiftly shelving blue water.

Their energy had gone and they paddled back, too spent to hoist the dingey, barely able to crawl over the rail and lie panting in the relentless heat.

Reynolds had a can opened and they finished it in silence. The shore line loomed far, far away, a twenty-four hours' sail at their best speed with the makeshift rig and the water was pitilessly flawless, heaving in the long swell, with an unmarked current that bore them northward along the edge of the reef which began to stand out in weedy shelvings as the tide lowered. They were through, but that was all. It seemed small gain under the conditions.

THEY held out until the sun began to go down. Perhaps they had drifted half a dozen miles. The cockpit was an open range, the cabin an oven. Perro lay panting pitifully with his tongue dripping precious moisture that leaked out of him. Twice they gave him coffee which he lapped in great gulps and lay down again. Night came, glorious but unappreciated, save for the relief from the sun. Still they lay motionless, unable to help themselves. The bright and hitherto shining face of Adventure had vanished, had changed into a shriveled mask with baleful, malicious eyes gazing at them through sunken sockets.

They saw only the seamy side of his brilliant garment, it stifled them like a winding sheet. The will to live passed from them as they suffered the torture of thirst in the windless night, prone on back or belly, writhing impotently as they breathed the superheated air that was an aggravation to their lungs, parching their throats more and more while, all about them, as they heaved on the long swell, there sounded the chuckle of water as it sucked at the overhang of bows and stern and mocked them.

The water blazed with starlike forms, rising, bursting, dissolving like magic marine fireworks. Every fish that swam trailed pale flame, streaks of light V'd out from a score of dorsal fins where sharks assumed patrol. Still the current swung them slowly north.

To Cole came the supreme desire to swim. If he could only do that, he fancied, he would obtain relief. The fish could not feel the heat a few fathoms down; perhaps with their nerveless systems they knew little of discomfort. Yet he remembered gasping goldfish in neglected aquariums and knew that now he shared their torment. It just described him, like a fish gasping for oxygen, with its nose half out of the water, its fins moving heavily, slowly suffocating. If he drowned—that would be a quick death and a wet one.

He roused himself on an elbow, conscious that he was letting himself approach voluntary delirium, and saw the luminous wakes of the sharks. He dropped back, panting with his effort.

Three bottles of ale. Three unopened bottles of ale! Warm, of course, but liquid, capable of relieving inflamed membranes. What sense in keeping them? Even one, divided. Almost a cupful apiece.

They were like mosquito larvae, wiggling to the top and finding a fatal film of kerosene between them and life. Cole had applied that remedy against the pests in camp. Might it not well be true that, as the wigglers were to men, so men to beings incomprehensible, unseen, mighty. The wigglers knew nothing outside their own dimensions, their own relativity.

The stars were like the pitiless eyes of gods carelessly, casually overlooking the squirming of dying human beings. And the stars themselves were but electrons in the atoms of infinity. Beyond all power of thought save as a realization of tremendous humility. Zone within zone. Still, as long as a man could think of these things, he must be a part of them—must be a part of the infinite whole—not just a cosmic incident.

The nightmare of the night drew to a close. The sun came up, flaming like a sword that was to shut them out of the garden of life. They crawled into strips of futile shade like slugs out of Summer heat. Some one, some time, opened the ale. It foamed out malignantly, wasting itself and the residue was like so much sawdust in their mouths. Once, it seemed, they grounded and stayed there for hours until something, the tide perhaps, took them off again. The dog panted like an engine's exhaust.

Out of oblivion a thought came to Reynolds. The inspiration of it brought him sitting, clawing at a transom cushion while his brain seethed in his dizzy head but the idea—the rapturous, life-saving idea persisted.

He tried to enunciate but could not. With the sudden strength of a brute burrowing for water where the desert soil shows a relenting sign, Reynolds worked with what seemed prodigious effort at the trapboards in the floor of the cabin. The intolerable smell of stale bilge almost choked him as he pawed about among some cans. No more tomatoes—this flat one was bully beef, this New Zealand rag. Beans—like sand, gritty, unbearable. Not there? But—some brain fissure held clear memory of the inventory—they had not used them. Beans again but green beans, string beans—a dozen cans of them—holding the water they were cooked in. He feebly juggled a can and heard it slosh.

Agony to find the opener. Water at last—but armored. Where—where? By an effort of recollection as prodigious as some great feat of muscular strength he remembered it was in the cockpit and dragged himself up the companionway. Cole lay there, body limp, face upturned, pale in the twilight, like death. But soon to be revived. Petrie was below and the dog—they must not forget the dog.

He cut a jagged hole and—proving in that fierce moment that he was man, not brute, poured a little of that flat, insipid, tepid but lifesaving liquid into the swollen mouth of

Cole, who slobbered at it with a thick tongue that functioned instinctively. Reynolds began to laugh—or sob—with sounds like the rasping of a heavy file and gathered himself together and stumbled below with his precious can.

FOUR days of drift, of slight advance and setback, four blistering days and torrid nights that saw the land advance and retreat, but gradually approach little by little and rouse them from their torpid apathy; brought them weak, scorched, with tongues mushroomed in mouths whose fevered membranes seemed continually scalded, within five miles of the shore and left them on a failing wind in the grip of a current that carried them parallel to the line of the land.

In the waning light of the afternoon they saw the tropical verdure of the coast, rising in velvety greens and violets suggestive of grateful shade and flowing watercourses. They gazed at it haggardly over the rail, too nearly gone to stand. It seemed to mock them like a mirage that would soon vanish into thin air. They lacked the strength and energy to launch the boat, and looked in lackluster fashion upon the bush that grew down to the edge of the water, ending in dense mangroves, offering no landing-place, giving no hint of fresh water. The dog lay on its side exhausted, barely breathing, its swollen, purple tongue outstretched, dry even of slime.

They were beyond speaking, almost beyond thought, thirty-six hours beyond the last drop of liquid for their tortured throats and dessicating bodies.

The air slowly cooled but they did not notice it. Practically naked, they crouched like so many corpses, without movement of limb, of eyes that seemed seared.

Twilight fell and the land took on mystery. It seemed to dissolve in the darkness until the stars once more revealed its dim mass. Slowly the *Adventurer* swung in the current, slowly it edged in and then, caught in some vagary of the great eddy, nosed off again. The moon rose and color showed faintly in the forest. Perfume came off to them in tiny wafts, grew stronger as a land breeze began to blow softly, then steadily. The schooner made leeway seawards, the wheel in a becket. No one stirred. Hope had deserted them, the oil that nourished the lamps of their wills, their souls, was low—the wicks charred almost dry.

A cape loomed up ahead. They were set to clear it and, though it stood out boldly from the shore, they passed it two miles out. It was a blunt promontory, bluff prowed as an ancient ship, its top tufted with palmy growth.

Perro stirred, tried to get to his feet, toppled, clawed at the deck and got up again, staggering, his moon shadow grotesque with the protruding tongue. They watched the dog as dead men stare. Vaguely they fancied it was about to have a fit, to die, to go ravening mad at the last. But it was too weak to be dangerous. And they did not care.

The dog's eyes bulged, its head lifted and its jaws opened. The merest wheeze of a dry yap—a creak—sounded as it tottered forward, glaring at the land, nose weakly lifted.

The three slowly turned their heads, looking like mummies coming slowly back to uncertain life.

A gleaming ribbon of silver stretched from the summit of the cape to its foot, waving in the wind, nebulous to their exhausted vision, as if seen out of focus. To their dull ears came a murmur, translating itself slowly to their senses. Perro, with truer instinct, wheezed again.

It was water, fresh water, a waterfall gushing to waste, cascading to the sea!

It roused in them some primitive fount of energy, galvanized them so that they pointed at it and gibbered to each other, rose, clinging to rail and stays, creeping forward, hope quickening within them, restoring effort.

Cole and Petrie feebly tugged at the anchor, pushed it overboard while Reynolds fumbled with the falls of the boat until they helped him lower it clumsily and half-fell, half-crawled into it. Petrie lurched under the weight of Perro, unable to jump.

The sails were unlowered. The *Adventurer*, like a great white moth, hovered at the end of the freed cable, the anchor finding bottom at six fathoms. Foot by foot they scooped their way toward the blessed signal with its entrancing, beckoning sound, the music of many waters, seeming to enwrap them in some strange sea-magic in which they moved without consciousness, the boat gliding with almost imperceptible motion, like a stricken beast dragging itself to a pool.

The fall emptied into a deep cleft and the foam of it rose phantasmal, the moonlight giving it a nimbus. The sea lapped softly on the shingle of a little beach that was set with boulders. The keel of the boat touched, grated. Perro scrambled, toppled over the rail, swimming to shore as the three fell out into the lacey surf, crawled on all fours out on the beach and so up, weird objects, half-human, half-bestial, into the wet coolness of the glen where the ferns plumed against them, on to where a pool showed like a bowl of mercury save where the torrent rushed at its far end and sent long ripples circling out to greet the three creatures that all tried to lap alike, letting the sweet fluid flow into their nearly closed mouths, snuffing it, swallowing with joyful, painful gulps, laving in it, their bodies seeming to absorb it, while it dissolved the sea crystals, soothed them in its soft embrace with the song of its fall, a lullaby that told them to drink and rest.

BY THE grace of a rising tide the boat was still there, nosing at the shingle when they returned to it, weak still but walking like men, the dog with his stub of a tail cocked to the vertical.

By the grace of a gentle wind the *Adventurer* still swung to her cable as they paddled out to her for anything that would hold water—fresh water—the true nectar for humans—and dogs. The tank was not to be trusted. They made resolve with their newfound voices never to venture beyond the three-mile limit. But they filled a breaker, bottles, cans, utensils from the galley, prodigal with the precious stuff.

Dawn came and found the *Adventurer* tacking along inshore on short legs, working up the coast, hugging it until they reached their goal. Petrie had the wheel, Perro cuddled beside him; the others slept, slept without dream or nightmare and woke, thirsty still, but with hunger once more asserting itself. The skin was peeling from them, their lips were still travesties, their joints ached and their fingers were cramped and stiff but life was alight in their eyes, the old lure was on them. They had suffered and somehow they felt as if they had won their spurs as knights of the unknown trails.

Go-fever gripped them yet. They gazed at the shores, fascinated by their beauty, looking upward to where the crest of the ranges hid the something that they sought, a treasure that was not just gold, the guerdon of the free adventurer, the lure that keeps the heart young and the spirit valiant, spurs on the aging body and gives full measure of reward—not always at the rainbow's end, but ever along the way.

"It's the first time," said Reynolds over his third tincup of coffee, "that I ever really appreciated the yarn about Bill Hutchings, brought out of the desert out Koolgardie way. He'd found his gold, had a nugget in each fist when they located him, with the dingos sniffing at him.

" 'I'm rich,' Bill says as soon as he could talk. 'Now I'm goin' to buy me a five-story house with ten bathrooms, a fountain in the parlor an' the dinin'-room, runnin' water in every other room, a dozen sprinklers for the lawn. There's to be a tank in the bathroom where I sleep an' the first thing I do when the house is finished is to turn on every —— faucet an' let 'em run."

" 'You'll ruin the house,' says the man he tells it to.

" 'What the —— do I care about a house?' asks Bill. 'I can buy fifty houses but I'll never get tired of the sound of runnin' water. 'Tis the finest music in the wide, wide world.' "

"He meant fresh water," suggested Cole.

"You can bet your sweet life he did," said Reynolds.

CHAPTER VI

THE STONE AGE

AROUND the cape they found a bay and, lying on a mountain slope, the houses of a prosperous-looking town. There were wharves and shipping sheds, a coasting steamer and a freight steamer anchored out in the roadstead, which was shallow. The chart gave them names. The place was Townsville, terminus of the northern railroad, so close had they been to the end of their troubles and to civilization's contact while they suffered on the southern side of the headland, charted as Cleveland Cape, the bay as Cleveland Bay.

Charters Towers gold mines were not far away, shipping through Townsville, though the place was mostly important for cattle, sheep and sugar. Nevertheless they were getting up into the gold country at last. Cleveland Bay merged into the greater expanse of Halifax Bay, whose northern promontory masked Dungeness and the mouth of the Herbert River. They did not go ashore; they wanted to get ahead and they hauled off on a good wind and an offshore leg with the coasting steamer puffing out after them, making a straight course to their tacks. It had left Sydney after them and overhauled them because of their hard luck. Slowly it disappeared ahead. By nightfall they sighted the Palm Islands and gave them a wide berth.

Before dawn, fog, such as they had left at San Francisco, wrapped the *Adventurer* in a fleecy garment, moisture dripping from the rigging, the sun looking like a thin red wafer pasted on gray paper. It was hazardous navigation and Petrie went warily, now that they were at their sea trip's end.

"Big island somewhere round here," he said. "Hinchinbrook, twenty-five hundred feet high—rum we can't see it at all. Must be a fog center. It's lightening a bit, but——"

"I can smell trees," said Cole. "Spruce—or hemlock."

"It's cedar," said Reynolds. "That's Hinchinbrook Island, Petrie. Covered with cedar. We must be right on top of it."

They were, and they dropped anchor, fearful of sailing past Dungeness and having to beat back. By ten o'clock the mist had all vanished and they headed up for the town, past it, into an opening between mangroves, and dropped the hook again in muddy water where a crocodile slid sluggishly off a log at their intrusion as they rowed ashore, filled with fresh energies.

Here was the Herbert River, the actual highway to the gold they sought. Here they would say good-by to civilization, try to get horses, buy a few supplies, see if they could get a native who would be in touch with interior tribes from whom they could get a guide.

"We've got to live on the country," said Reynolds. "Save all our own grub till we get across the range into the sand and spinifex country where we won't be able to get any game at all. The blacks 'll supply us to the dividing range as we go along. We won't eat a lot that they will but tree wallaby tail ain't half bad, and there's jungle hens, crawfish, honey and lizards. Snakes, if it comes to it. Roast snake—the way they cook it—is first chop. It's the way they eat it sickens me."

"Talking of grub," said Cole, "let's steer first for a restaurant. I'm dying to have some one else cook my chow and serve me with it for a change. Darn these mosquitos! Got New Jersey licked."

"We'll leave 'em behind in the mountains," consoled Reynolds.

The pests swarmed in clouds on every fraction of exposed flesh. Tobacco smoke only seemed to attract them. But they were not so bad in town. And they found a little eating-house with a garrulous owner who talked while they ate tea and toast, mutton chops, more toast, marmalade and rice pudding.

Their business bothered him.

"There's only three things up here," he said. "Main one's sugar, next comes baccy an' some claims there's gold in the mountains. Now which are you after?

"We're looking around," said Petrie vaguely, "for a Sydney syndicate. If we see anything that looks good to us we'll likely get you to help us handle the matter. Till then, you understand, we've got to keep quiet."

The man nodded, a finger to his veiny nose.

"Mum's the word. You can trust me. An' I can save you money. Beats everything how price goes up if folks think a syndicate is buyin' in. Now, take the higher ground here. Used to be all corn. Then they cut the gums an' now it's all sugar an' price soared to heaven an' back. But baccy's the game, gents. Grows like weeds. All you got to do is to pick the kind to suit the soil an' yore fortune's made. I wish I 'ad a bit of capital."

"How about getting horses?" asked Cole.

"'Orses? There ain't a dozen 'orses between here an' 'Erbert Vale. You won't get no 'orses, gents; sale, loan or swipe. Better take a boat. No 'orses near town and the 'igher you go the worse it is. Nothin' but blacks, naked as worms, dirty as 'ogs, man-eaters. Kill you for yore shirt soon's look at you. They don't eat whites but they cuts out yore kidneys an' swallers the fat. Dries the kidneys an' wears 'em for a charm. That ain't spoofin', gents. Believe me or not. You got to watch yore steps, I'm tellin' you. Don't you go too far. You pick you out some nice river-flat for yore syndicate an' grow baccy. On'y gold-chasers go way up-river an' 'arf of them don't come back.

"How about labor for the plantations?" asked Petrie, noticing Reynolds' anxiety that no one should think they were after gold.

"Ah, there you 'ave it, gov'nor," said the restaurant-keeper. "'Elp? There ain't none. The blarsted blacks 'ud rather 'unt. Things gone to the —— since the war, mister. But we keeps the blacks out of Dungeness. Used to walk mother-naked up the street, men an' gins. Not 'arf as respectable as monkeys."

The impossibility of getting horses was confirmed elsewhere. It was a setback. Reynolds told them that the rowing upstream would be hard work as the river narrowed in the hills and they would have to leave it after some fifty miles—as he remembered distances—on account of cataracts. Then proceed on foot, probably toting their own baggage.

"The Myalls won't pack a thing but their weapons," he said. "Make their gins carry everything else. They'll guide us and hunt for us and pass us on through the tribes. If we could find a first-class corroboree man—that's a chap who manages the big dances they have—we'd be in luck if we could coax him to come along. Those chaps know all the tribes round them and they're favorites. They can visit when others would get killed and eaten. First of all we've got to get hold of some black along the river to talk for us with the Myalls. I used to talk a bit of their lingo and I'll pick it up again maybe, but right now we'll need an interpreter."

But they found no civilized or half-civilized blacks in Dungeness. The restaurant man was right. The natives fought shy of a place where they were not wanted and were ill-treated. That was setback Number Two.

But they got the supplies they wanted and found that, with their inquiries, the mode of their arrival and the fact they were going up-river, their business created entirely too much curiosity in the small and somewhat sleepy town. They got a lot of free advice on the supposition they were gold-seekers. Most of it was warning. No one seemed disposed to envy them or to follow them, but when they talked of tobacco men thrust a tongue in their cheek.

"Stay right here in town if you want plantation land," was the advice. "We'll take you to see all there is available in a launch."

They silently cursed the garrulous restaurant man. It was plain that the town was agog with their business affairs. Their last act was to make arrangements for leaving the *Adventurer* in a freshwater creek that would rot the seaweed and keep the bottom fairly clear until they returned. It was no easy job warping the sloop into the mooring-ground, snugging down and making up their packing outfits. The man who rented them the mooring called on them after dark as they were preparing to turn in under the netting they had bought that day against the ferocious mosquitos.

"Heerd up-town you boys was goin' after gold," he said. "None of my bisness and it's agen my own profit, seein' you've taken my moorin'-ground, but don't you do it. It's all bosh an' bunkum. I've known the 'Erbert River sence I was knee-high to a grass'opper, I 'ave. I've seen 'em go up after gold an' I've looked for 'em to come back. Some did—most didn't. Not a durn one of 'em brought back gold. Stands to reason if they was gold the blacks 'd 'ave it, wudn't they? Ever 'ear of a savage that didn't 'ave necklaces, bracelets and ear-rings an' the like when they can find gold or silver. Show me a 'Erbert River Myall with 'em. Necklaces, yes, but made of yeller straw."

"What makes you think we're going after gold?" Cole asked him.

The man grinned.

"See a cat sneakin' through the grass you know she wants a bird, don't you? You got rifles an' you got picks an' shovels. I'll wager you ain't goin' black-buryin'."

He roared at his feeble pun and his sharp-sightedness. Finally they got rid of him.

"Our trip seems to be fairly well advertized," said Petrie. "Only they think we're just plain suckers. They don't take us in earnest."

"The old boy's reasoning wasn't so bad," said Cole with the first qualm of real doubt assailing him. "Seems to me it's always been natives who have tipped off gold. The Incas had their gold ornaments and the African tribes their bangles for explorers to look at."

"That don't work out," said Petrie. "There was gold in California but the Indians didn't know it, or value it. Anyway, they didn't use it. They were diggers. These blacks are still in the stone age. They don't know a thing about metals except where they steal it ready made from the whites."

"And I've *seen* the gold," put in Reynolds. "Don't forget that. Just so long as they think we are suckers they won't trail us, and that suits our book."

They were tired but they talked late. The *whirr* of mosquitos, the damp fog that came up river with the night, the smell of mud-flats and even the bellow that Reynolds said came from a bull crocodile could not lower their spirits. They seemed in actual touch with their destination, linked to it by the river, though Reynolds warned them they had a hard trek beyond the mountains and over the desert.

"But I don't believe we'd have done any better goin' to Cardwell," he said. "I mean about horses. We've got to make up our minds to hoof it and carry most of our own stuff though we might bribe a black fellow with a lot of *suttongo*."

"What's that?"

"Tobacco. Word just came back to me. It's the standard pay, outside of clothing. Like that chap said, 'a black 'll kill you for your shirt if you give him the chance.' "

"I thought the blacks were most of 'em tame," said Cole."

"The tame ones have died. They say there never were more than a hundred and fifty thousand all told when the whites first came. Now there are about twenty thousand—on a guess. Most of that twenty are wild tribes roaming round where few white men go—where we're goin'. But the first ones we'll see will be more or less civilized—know some English anyway. There'll be camps up-river and if we don't see 'em, we'll smell 'em, if the wind is right. I'll promise you that. Besides they'll spot us and some of 'em are sure to come around. I'm not worryin' about that."

"What are you worrying about, Tom?" asked Cole, who thought he caught a note of anxiety in Reynolds' voice.

"Nothing, really. I want to be sure of a guide. You see, we came in from the south that time. We came out this way but, at the start, I wasn't sizing up the country and later I was half-woozy. When we get to the top of the divide we'll be lookin' out over the scrub and desert to where Bill an' me worked in. I'd have suggested goin' that way again but this is lots the shortest—ought to be—an' we went in on Bill's tip. He made the trail an' I wasn't too sure of bein' able to hit the desert at the right place again if we tried that route. But we passed two chunks of lava hills and the gold was on the west side of the third lot. There were caves there with red, yellow and blue pictures in 'em. We just got a glimpse of the caves, got some water out of 'em, when our trouble started. I've got an idea they're sort of sacred.

"Anyhow, from the ridge we'll get a bird's-eye view of the layout, strike for the third bunch of lava and there we are. What we want is a black who'll take us quickest to the ridge by the nearest point from where we have to quit the boat an' the river. The stream ends up in gorges you couldn't travel, let alone get out of. And we'd lose ourselves in the forest. But we'll find one all right."

THEY breakfasted early, waiting for the flood to help them, starting finally at a steady clip. The dingey had two sets of rowlocks and they sculled in pairs with the third man steering and Perro with eager eyes and a more eager tongue running in and out of dripping jaws as he stood in the bows, forepaws on the stem, missing nothing, barking at crocodiles, butterflies, weaver birds and wild pigeons without distinction.

By noon the mangroves were left behind; large fields of waving sugar-cane alternated with uncleared scrub; there were coffee and tobacco plantations, here and there white buildings on the hillsides. Streams came in at intervals with patches of bright emerald grass and darker vine scrub, the bed of the valley flattened though it gradually narrowed to where the high uplands dense with scrub woods closed it in.

They made, they calculated, twenty-five miles that day and camped on an abandoned cattle-station, leaving the deserted, ant-infested house alone and eating in the garden under a bread-tree, which, with some coconut palms, seemed languishing. But there were ripe figs and, round the fig tree, a passion vine had twined and offered its own fruits. There were mangos and some neglected and sour oranges, also cumquats, loquats and guavas with a bed of less aristocratic but none the less welcome sweet potatoes, run wild. They loaded their stomachs and planned to load the boat the next morning. They slept ashore, listening to the pleasant run of the water, now swift and inclined to rapids, thankful that the mosquitos seemed amenable to the smudge fire.

Perro wakened them with fierce barking. It was just getting light. The Airedale made little rushes at two dark figures that stood watching maliciously, evidently not afraid of the dog, inclined to tease—or to kill—if it had not been for the presence of the aroused white men who swiftly snatched at their weapons.

They were blacks, tall, lean, legs and arms startlingly lacking in apparent muscles. Their chocolate-colored skins were dirty and absolutely naked save for necklaces made of yellow straws cut into small sections and the hair that grew heavily on their chins, their chests and—less profusely—on their shoulders and lower arms. Their long noses were triangular, deeply sunken at the top so that their dark eyes with yellowish whites, flecked with red veins and spots, seemed very closely set. Chest and belly were cicatrized with tribal weals.

Both carried slender ten-foot spears and they stood with the foot of one leg tucked up against the inside of the other at the knee, supported by their spears, their legs in the shape of figure 4's, the posture ludicrous in the face of the increasing rage of the Airedale who seemed convinced they were deliberately mocking and continued to growl deep even after Petrie called him off. Reynolds talked to the visitors in bush-pidgin and the taller of the two answered him, using some native words that Reynolds interpreted out of a stimulated memory. The faces of the black fellows were good-natured but cunning and they grinned amiably.

"They're after wallaby," said Reynolds. "It's all right."

"It's all right that Perro woke us up," said Cole under his breath to Petrie. "Otherwise those beggars could have speared, butchered and eaten us and we never would have known what happened."

"We're too salty to eat, Reynolds says," said Petrie. "Just the same I wouldn't trust 'em back of me."

"You like belong along of us?" asked Reynolds. "What your name?"

"Me Dangoran. This Morbora," said the taller. "What for you want? You no got *suttongo?*"

Reynolds divided part of a stick between them and their faces held room for nothing but smiles as they rubbed the smoking into fragments and tucked it into dirty wooden pipe bowls, almost stemless, which they produced from their hair.

"*Madshi?*" asked Dangoran.

Reynolds gave them two matches apiece and they lit up.

"We like you find us Number One black fella, all same corroboree man, know plenty tribe. Can do take us along on topside *mangan.** Also we like some one carry this goods—" he indicated the packs brought ashore and in the boat—"we like you go along speak for us. Morbora, he talk bush-pidgin—he go too."

Petrie had started breakfast. The preparations caught the eyes of the two blacks. They squatted for a palaver, their glances roaming toward the fire, the opened cans of pork and beans, the damper bread Cole was experimenting with. Their wide nostril-flanges opened and shut.

"It's the food'll bring 'em if anything will," said Reynolds aside as Dangoran and Morbora put their heads together and jabbered. "Slip 'em a can of beans between 'em. Cold'll do."

Busy, dirty fingers pried into the contents of the open can and conveyed the beans *en masse* to greedy mouths. All had disappeared in half a minute.

"Can do," said Dangoran. "Can do for lele while, maybe go top of *mangan.* Suppose you give plenty *suttongo*, you give *shirshi*, give hat? Give plenty grub all same?"

He rubbed his belly and cast an appealing glance for more but Cole, at a shake of the head from Reynolds, was adamant. Two like this would gorge food for a week in an hour.

"Me corroboree man," went on Dangoran. "Morbora all same. Know plenty kind blackfella, can talk, can fix. Only not go other side *mangan.* No good that place. Now, you give *shirshi*, *suttongo*, hat. You come along bimeby we *vooly*† plenty wallaby. Tonight corroboree stop. You come. Tomorrow maybe we go."

"You go we give you *shirshi*," countered Reynolds. "Give you hat." He unpacked garments secured for the purpose, a cheap cotton shirt of wide red and white stripes and a cricket cap segmented in blue and yellow.

The eyes of the blacks rolled to the coveted objects and remained there until Reynolds put them away again out of sight.

"That's fixed," he said. "They may have lied to us. Always say what they think will please if there are gifts in sight. They sound too good to be true. If they are dance-managers we're in luck."

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* Mountain. † Kill.

"What's a dance-manager?" asked Petrie as they sat at their meal while Dangoran and Morbora hung around for scraps, watching every mouthful taken.

"They hold a dance once or twice a year —every tribe. The whole thing is a sort of show—a takeoff on what has happened is the big hit. Then there is a song describing it all and the song and the figures are made up new every time. If it goes big the dance-managers are like stage favorites. All the neighboring tribes visit peaceably for the corroboree. Once a year they hold a *borbory* and fight out quarrels. In between times they steal each other's gins an' maybe some kids and kill a man or two—for eating. But the dance-managers are given privileges—sort of tabu."

THE two blacks were not listening in. Both had started to stare into the air and at the neighboring trees.

"You like sugar-bag?" asked Dangoran suddenly.

"He means honey," said Reynolds. "Sure we like; suppose you catch."

"You give *suttungo?*"

"Small piece *suttungo* maybe I give." To Cole and Petrie he said: "The beggars get greedier all the time. Want tobacco for putting a stick on a fire if they think they can get it. But some honey would go well. He's spotted the bees. Hive's somewhere up that dead tree. Watch him climb it."

It did not look like a good prospect. The tree was easily four feet in diameter and there were no branches within forty feet of the ground. The bark was off and it gave neither handhold or foothold. Dangoran spoke to his companion and the latter went off and came back trailing a length of smooth vine behind him. Of this Dangoran made a *kāmin* or climbing-loop.

With his sharp teeth he bit at the vine to make the length that suited him, breaking it down after the bite, repeating on the other side. He carefully wiped off his hands from all moisture, flung the *kāmin* about the bole of the tree and caught the free end with his right hand. There was a knot already made at the other end which he held so that the knot projected between thumb and forefinger, the rest of his hand closed tightly about the vine.

Winding the right end three or four times about his forearm, letting the spare length trail, Dangoran planted a foot against the tree, his back bent, arms extended in front, keeping as far as possible from the trunk and literally walking up the tree, flinging the *kāmin* loop ahead as needed. He made a few stops for breath, reached his objective, the place where his keen eyes had seen the bees entering, and began to chop at the decayed wood with the hatchet he had borrowed from the camp and carried up in his mouth.

His fellow stood at the base of the tree and caught the pieces that Dangoran dropped down to him, after Dangoran had first sampled the honey by filling his capacious mouth. Reynolds rescued some of the comb as quickly as possible. The hands of the blacks, like the rest of their bodies, were neither clean nor savory. Water was used, Reynolds said, only to lie in for cooling during very hot weather, and for drinking.

Then Dangoran came rapidly down the tree, cutting notches with the hatchet, removing the *kāmin* from his right wrist to right thigh to give him a free hand while he made his next two niches, his left hand still clamped tightly round the vine, prevented by the knot from slipping through.

"Plenty more sugar-bag in that tree," he said, panting and proud from his exhibition and the evident admiration of his gymnastics in the eyes of the white men. "I take some, rest he all fall along bottom. Bimeby I catchee. You give *suttongo?*"

They gave him a little tobacco and got enough uncontaminated honey for their needs. The bees that had gathered about Dangoran in a black cloud had returned to their despoiled storehouse. They had not bothered the black.

"Suppose his smell protects him, or his dirt?" Petrie asked *sotto voce* while the two blacks took their honey to a bowl-surfaced rock near the river, scooped water into it and stirred it all, after which they chewed grass tufts into dipping brushes and sucked the mixture from them.

"Australian bees don't sting," said Reynolds. "They bite a little but they don't sting. Good honey, all right."

It was dark brown and had a strong odor but the flavor was delicate enough. If Dangoran could find many treasure troves of this sort he might prove worth his pay.

The sun mounted and the dew swiftly drew to the top of the grass and the tips of the leaves evaporating in a mist that rapidly cleared. Dango—they had cut his name for convenience—and his mate vanished, promising to return. It was afternoon before Dango appeared, much excited, covered with perspiration and smelling far from a lily. He directed them to a natural terrace above the river bottoms about a mile from their camp. Already smoke was curling up among the grass.

A wallaby hunt was about to begin.

Blacks were wading across the river carrying their long spears and throwing-sticks.

"Keep your eye on the beggars," Reynolds cautioned. "When they're excited you can never tell what they may do. Twig the women?

The females of the tribe, quite devoid of clothing, kept behind trees across the water, some with children on their shoulders, baskets on their back, some carrying burning sticks in their hands, all shy but keen to glimpse the white men. Dango in his shirt and the other with his cap stood out proudly and prominently apart.

Spearmen divided into three parties, on either side of the natural field and at its end. The smoke burst into flames, orange in the sun, burning with a distorting dazzle of heat above the fire. Then dense clouds rose and the view was veiled with a sort of fog through which men and wallabies leaped and darted, the blacks shouting and yelling, looking like shadowy fiends from the pit as they followed the course of the forking flames, jumping and racing to keep ahead. Spears whizzed and the wallabies made prodigious springs with now and then one jumping on with a ten-foot spear sticking springily out of its back.

IMPELLED from the throwing-sticks, two feet long, with a wooden hook at one end in which the spear socketed, held along the upper side of the stick which, with the weapon, was gripped by the first three fingers and carried back as far as possible, the weapons were flung with the force of a sling. But the stinging smoke, the excitement of the chase, with the fire racing up behind the spearmen, the elusiveness of the leaping targets, dimly seen, brought the bag down to four fat, long-eared and long-tailed wallabies, looking, save for their short forelegs and enormous hind legs, for all the world like mammoth rats.

The men seemed elated at their success and the women, forgetting their timidity in the presence of the whites, came wading across the river, bringing grubs they had found by pulling up acacias and searching the dirt among the roots. The grubs were thrown in the red hot ashes of the hunting-fire and swallowed eagerly.

"You come along camp when sun go," said Dango. "Come quick that time. When moon come up corroboree begin."

The camp, he told them, was just around the next bend in the river. It seemed strange to think that two days back they had been in comparative civilization, eating restaurant meals at Dungeness, and now had suddenly crossed the border into barbarism. The contrast between the streets of the little seaport and the flaming, smoking river-bottom with the weird-looking wallabies, the naked savages, the whizzing spears and, afterward, the gobbled grubs, could not have been more emphatic.

"Wonder if we'd have made a hit with them if one of us had shot a wallaby—or all three of us," said Petrie. "I never thought of it. Too interested in looking on. It was like an illustration to the Inferno."

"Wouldn't have been a hit if we'd fired and missed, any of us," answered Reynolds. "They may seem amiable but it's the fear of our guns that holds them from trying on something. They think a heap more of our baccy than they do of us. If they got the chance to stick a spear through us and get away with the loot, they'd do it in a jiffy. I mean if we turned our backs on 'em or offered 'em any temptation. They say they'll stalk a white man for days waiting for a chance to get him. We've got to go on watch of a night—one of us all the time—from now on."

By his acquaintanceship with the terrane and the customs of the natives, Reynolds had now become the virtual and natural leader. It was his expedition, primarily, and neither Petrie nor Cole resented his directorship. Sights and sounds were too new to permit of anything but constant interest, their comradeship knew no flaw, it had stood severe test already and they gave themselves over to the sheer enjoyment of adventure. The spice of danger given by Reynolds' warning was a welcome one.

The camp was easily found by the fires

among the huts, makeshifts that showed no housecraft and no skill. Some of them were bush-tops entangled, rather than woven, to make a roof, none better than a low covering of boughs under which a man might crawl to a shelter open at both ends. A few consisted of forked sticks driven into the ground about three feet high with poles in the forks and a crude thatch of boughs. The most pretentious was made of small trees laid sloping along both sides of a fallen bole, roofed with grass.

Dango came to meet them. Morbora was to furnish the orchestra, he explained, and presumably was tuning up. But Dango was evidently the Beau Brummell of the tribe. His hair was molded with beeswax into a cone and stuck all over with feathers and cockatoo's crests. Mussel shells were glued to his chin with wax. His long legs, lacking apparent calf muscles, for all his tree-climbing and hunting, were striped in red and yellow. He carried boomerang and *nolla-nolla* club and he evidently considered himself elevated over all other blacks, Myalls or civilized.

According to him, the entertainment was an assured success.

"Plenty make those blackfella laugh," he said. "One —— fine *nili** we show them."

A great fire was leaping at one end of a place where the grass had been trampled down for dancing. The rising moon showed its pale aura back of the tree tops and the spectators were already in place as Dango led the way. The men sat apart in two long rows leaving a vacant plot between them, the fire at one end and, at the other, the orchestra, with a place for the celebrated *première danseuse* and the women parked at the corners. The women squatted on their heels and the men either crossed their legs or sat on one ham.

The orchestra was Morbora and he was the orchestra. The music consisted of a song in a hoarse but powerful tenor and the clanging together of his boomerang and *nolla-nolla*. The rhythm was accented by the beating of the open palms of the women against their laps but this *juba* had not started when the white men arrived and took up position, hardly noticed by the blacks, whose eyes were alternately strained toward the spot where the moon must soon appear and toward a screen of boughs back of the fire. Dango vanished behind this screen, which seemed to be dressing-room and entrance wings for the performers, not yet in evidence, though Morbora was crooning and beating his wooden weapons in an overture.

Suddenly the round moon swung up and the spectators gave a grunt. There was a pause and the dancers came rushing out from behind the screen in two lines, capering about to form in fours, sixteen in all. Their waxed hair either stood out in feathered tufts or was pressed into one ornamented mass. They wore false beards of wood fiber and were striped and spotted with red and yellow ocher on limbs either plastered in white or smeared with crushed charcoal and fat.

Gradually they approached the orchestra, grunting in a savage harmony, keeping time with blows given to right and left with tomahawks and boomerangs to imaginary enemies. Close up they scattered, running and leaping to the far end of the dancing-ground to reform, coming on again with arms akimbo, knees kept far apart, hopping and grunting.

Moonlight and firelight in combination made the scene more fantastic with the clattering of Morbora's weapons, the high solo of his song, the hollow slaps of the women, the grunting of the dancers and the heavy thump of their feet.

Once more the sixteen came forward with twists and turns, bowing and leaping, halting suddenly with their weapons extended in a Fascisti salute at arms' length. The *ballerina* had arrived.

She leaped swiftly out of the darkness and now stood beside Morbora. She was young, of a good figure and, for a native, handsome. Her nose lacked the deepset triangular effect of the tribesmen in general, her eyes were lustrous and her teeth perfect. She wore only a narrow apron of opossum yarn, for effect rather than modesty. Grunts of approval greeted her.

The *première danseuse* had no ornaments; she was unpainted, though most of the other women had their faces banded in black and red. And she had little imagination. With arms extended and fingers spread wide apart she jumped up and down in the same spot continually, apparently enjoying herself immensely and unrelieved by competitor or understudy.

Now Dango appeared, resplendent, carrying a tuft of feathers in his mouth, a stick in his right hand. He was followed by two others, the last two playing their rôles of buffoon, kneeling down oppposite each other, putting their sticks into the ground, grimacing and gesturing in crude comedy. While the sixteen remained in place, but still twisting and turning to the rhythm, the pair of clowns ran up and down, playing at tag, leaping like frogs. Dangoran solemnly, hopped up and down *vis à vis* to the woman.

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* Girl

Laughs came from the spectators—broad grins from the women, guffaws from the men at the clownish pantomime. And all the time the female dancer hopped up and down and Morbora, his eyes downcast, beat with his weapons and sang his strophes in his hoarse voice, beginning the recurring stanzas over and over again with new enthusiasm.

Now and then some one flung fresh fuel on the fire as the moon rose in the starry sky. When the three left after two hours, returning to the boat, which they had left at the river bend in charge of Perro, Morbora was still furnishing the music, the girl was still leaping up and down and the clowns careering about the solid block of four dancers who grunted and twisted and turned and brandished their weapons to right and left.

* * *

THE faint sound of it came to their ears as they drifted down-stream to their camp, almost exactly like a wheezing steam engine with slam and pound, with escaping steam and protest of ill-oiled parts, laboring away where the glow of the big fire showed faintly between the trees.

"Keep that sort of thing going all night," said Reynolds. "Sleep all morning and fight all afternoon. Once in a while they'll eat. Grub is incidental with them. They never have what you might call a feast, either among themselves or with other tribes. I suppose food's too apt to be scarce.

"That's one reason why they don't welcome kids. There are a lot of babies eaten soon after they are born. They wring the little beggars' necks and roast 'em."

"Stringing us?" asked Petrie.

"You don't know the half of it. I'm not going to tell you. But I've seen women's breasts with the nipples cut off so they couldn't nurse. These chaps are real savages. When they visit with each other the great stunt is to pick the cooties out of each other's wool—partly for compliment and partly because they like to eat 'em. Fact.

"Chief difference between them and animals is that they know how to make fire and they can laugh. They'll cook those wallabies by chucking 'em on hot ashes, skin, insides and all, turn 'em by the tails and scorch the hair off. Then they take out the guts—just them—put in stones instead—watch as long as they can stand it and then tear the flesh apart in chunks. They eat stinking fish. I've seen 'em eat a dead eel that dropped apart when they picked it out of the river. The women eat the bodies of the tribe that die a natural death and the chap who is smartest at getting *talgoro*—that's human flesh—for a tidbit is top-hole. Everybody shares with him what they have, hoping for a tidbit next time he brings home the bacon.

"They'll stay with you so long as your food and tobacco hold out. They ain't likely to try and kill you until they find out they don't have to be afraid of you—then look out. There was a chap called Jacky, when I was here before, who killed a white man with his tomahawk and chucked him into the river because the white man wouldn't share his grub with him. Just met the man and offered to build his fire for him. Suppose he thought that entitled him to half the meal. Anyway, he whanged him over the head as he was drinking. I don't believe they ever got him. He was a top-hole man. His tribe sent women as a bribe to the black troopers."

"Nice little country you've brought us to," said Cole. "Cheery conversation at this time of night."

"Three of us. Hard to catch us napping. And the country's all right this side of the mountains. We'll have hard work getting through the scrub but its sure beautiful and there's lot of water."

"That helps," yawned Petrie.

The moon reached her zenith and slowly descended westward, the breeze sighed through the palms and the voices of night-birds rang out sharply but sweetly. Dawn came with a swift flush of sky above the scrub-clad tops of the mountains reflected in the flowing river, and still the monotonous sound of the dance went on; still Morbora, his voice only a croak, beat at his weapons while the clowns capered and Mollé-Mollé, the beautiful and desired, hopped up and down. extremely pleased with herself, coquetting with her big eyes at Dangoran, leaping before her as the men grunted and the women clapped, squatting naked as apes, tirelessly watching the performance.

THE sun was topping the ridge the next morning when Perro decided it was time to literally dig them out. The night was cold enough for blankets, the morning air damp and oppressive despite the glitter of the sunshine on the forest, that was flashing back from palms and ferns that were dripping with the heavy dew slowly turning to vapor that rose languidly from land and river. Within an hour it was all gone and the sun striking with full warmth in which the three of them basked like lizards, naked as the blacks sleeping in their primitive camps.

Reynolds drew a map in the sand of the river with a stick showing the general direction of their trail, supplemented by a map they had procured in Sydney which, not being a survey and on a small scale, they could only use as a check. But it showed the Herbert River flowing from the west in a deep cañon of a spur named Rocky Hills before its course swerved abruptly to the north and forked at a settlement named Cashmere, not far from its source in the Belvando Range.

They were to follow the river up for a few miles until they reached rapids below a high cascade. The water was white and tempestuous, the woods too dense to permit of portage and, above the fall, the stream was impassable for a boat, racing along in a narrow gut of rock.

Leaving the boat they would have to parallel the course of the river through the scrub on the southern side, so as to avoid crossing the cañon at its northern turn, and keep straight west across the divide to the beginning of the desert, the land of sand and spinifex, of hostile tribes and little water—but the land of gold.

"It's a great country," said Petrie. "Send a chap crazy to try and paint it though. Sunshine on all those masses of green is beyond putting on canvas. Just blobs of light. Dazzling."

Across the river rose the scrub. The local name was, like the term bush in South Sea latitudes, an injustice.

Giant ferns merged with fan palms, fan-palms with bananas waving their emerald banners upward toward other palms whose lofty stems lifted from the blending mass where vines twisted and twined. Higher were larger forest trees, giant figs among them. Here and there gleams showed where cascades rushed down toward Herbert River. Bird notes were frequent. Giant cuckoos shrieked and doves cooed. Starlings squalled and catbirds mewed. Flocks of Torres Strait pigeons, white and black, soared from high tree to high tree. Jungle-hens gave out melancholy cries and now and then there sounded a deep bell-like note that sounded so like a great gong it seemed impossible that any throat could emit it.

All these bird sounds gradually ceased toward noon and silence brooded over the landscape, save for the rushing of the river, the occasional rustle of the spreading tree ferns or the banana palms in the fitful breeze.

Once or twice there sounded a thundering boom, suggesting as much the beating of drums or hollow logs as the voice of the cassowary. The humid heat was enervating and they alleviated it by spending most of the morning in the stream itself, Perro included.

They ate fruit for the noonday meal, lacking appetite for more than that and a smoke.

Drowsily stretched in the dappled shade of a flowering bush, they were half asleep, half watching the flight of a dozen brilliant butterflies that seemed to be performing a mating air-dance before a clump of deep orange honeysuckle, when Perro gave a gruff bark and was not on his feet before two blacks seemed to materialize out of the honeysuckle. One moment and there was nothing but the pirouetting butterflies and then there stood Dangoran and Morbora—without sound, without scent, even for the Airedale's sharp nostrils.

Either there was more wind than they had fancied and the two blacks had taken advantage of its direction or they had found some method of offsetting their natural odor. They had washed the *corroboree* paint from their bodies, which might have had something to do with it, or they might have used some sort of odorous herbs or flowers. Whatever it was, it made their entrance effective and it was plain that they were both highly pleased at having surprized the white men.

They could get no porters, they said.

And they themselves had come only because they had given their word.

"We go tomorrow," added Dangoran. "Plenty too much tired now. You give us *suttongo*. Give me *shirshi*, Morbora hat."

Reynolds produced the prizes and the pair promptly donned them. The effect was ludicrous with the candy-striped shirt, short of measure, covering less than the upper third of Dango, emphasizing the nakedness of the rest of him; and the blue and yellow cap above Morbora's beeswaxed locks. Warned by Reynolds, they forebore to laugh.

"When we get top of *mangan*," promised Reynolds, "I give Dango hat, give Morbora *shirshi*."

"You've always got to keep something ahead of 'em," he said, "like the carrots ahead of the donkey. Otherwise they'd cut an' run with what they've got."

Their smoke finished, the two blacks carefully took off their treasures, bestowed them on a bush and went to sleep. The smell of cooking supper brought them to with twitching nostrils, long before they opened their eyes. Meantime Petrie had spent the afternoon impressing upon Perro the necessity for a tolerance against the two natives, gaining at last a sort of armed truce. Perro showed occasional gleams of teeth as his lips curled. Every little while his eyes rolled ominously at the slumbering blacks and he never lost his conviction that they were not to be trusted. Cole and Reynolds arranged the packs that they would have to tote themselves, making them as light as possible, eliminating all but necessities and cacheing the rest.

Supper over all five smoked. Dangoran and Morbora apart.

"Too bad smoking don't have a peace pipe significance with these chaps," said Cole. "I'd feel easier about those two. They grin at you but their eyes ain't even friendly. I suppose one of us 'll have to keep watch nights from now on, Reynolds?"

"Sure will. Never can tell what they are thinking about."

Morbora was lying on his back, beating *nolla-nolla* and spear-handle together for accompaniment to his chant, in which Dangoran joined him. There were only three notes to the tune and the words were repeated over and over.

"Wombon mareari! Wombon mareari!
Moridan kobi beebon bindalgo."

"What for that song?" asked Reynolds.

"Talk along this," answered Dango, patting the knob on his club.

Late in the night when Cole woke up, chilly from the river fog, he saw the fire burning dimly through the mist, heard the repetition of the little war chant. Over and over, hoarse but untiring, the clatter of club and spear and the—

"Wombon mareari! Wombon mareari!
Moridan kobi beebon bindalgo."

CHAPTER VII

SAND AND SPINIFEX

REYNOLDS took the two blacks the next morning up-river on a pretext of examining their route while Petrie and Cole dragged the boat up a narrow creek and hid it to the best of their ability. It would be a big temptation to any native and, if stolen, a sad loss to them, returning.

From the beginning the march through the mountains proved no easy matter, the two blacks having the best of it. They could not be coaxed or bribed to carry anything but their weapons and the climate was their own though there were plenty of times when they suffered from it. There was no apparent trail; the twists and turns necessitated by the thick bush were infinitely confusing, but their guides went on with confidence while the whites toiled under their loads, handled carefully because of the dynamite.

The way was constantly opposed by steep ravines and there were far too many plains and slopes covered with loose stones. Wherever root could grip, trees and bushes grew, creeping and twining plants netted the ground. There were places so dense that the hides of the two blacks bled from thorn pricks, experts as they were at worming their way through the scrub, able to swing along overhead at arms' length from tree to tree in the worst places and the clothing of the three got torn and spotted red from the puncture of their tenderer skins.

The lawyer-palm, creeping through the forest for hundreds of feet, looping about every obstruction, every inch of its finger-thick stem studded with clinging, stabbing waitabits, its leaves equally armed, sometimes formed so dense a wattle that a long detour was necessary. The humid atmosphere did not, as Petrie said, "add to the joys of travel."

They were perpetually soaked in sweat, stained with lush leaves where they tripped and fell, and Perro looked at his master with eyes that could hold no hate but carried the question "why bring a dog to a land like this?" For long stretches he had to be carried, so treacherous and thorny was the deep honeycombing of undergrowth.

There were compensations, when they flung themselves down by a pool with the water clear as crystal and ice cold in the shadow of dense trees. Everywhere streams and rivers came tumbling down with magnificent waterfalls. Resting, a brief smoke in progress, they could admire the magnificence of the thick woods with every conceivable shade of green—of gold where the sun shafted through—every variety of leaf from the broad banana banner to elephant-eared vines or the splendid fronds of tree-ferns, of other palms whose graceful shafts went shooting up, dwarfed only by the blue gums whose foliage towered more than four hundred feet above the forest floor.

There were strange grass-trees with clumps of wiry leaves on ten foot slender stems topped by spikes of white blossoms. There were wild orange, pepper, mangosteen, enormous figs, occasional mammoth pines, flame trees dropping scarlet flakes of fire.

Gigantic lilies grew to twice the height of the tallest of them. The native tulip flowered in the dark jungle glades, holding its cups of honey. Orchids were everywhere, and enormous clumps of rhododendron.

Flying foxes glided from hollow trees. Ten-foot boas and green treesnakes stalked and flushed these and the birds, even the weird tree kangaroo. The boom of the cassowary broke the silence and they found its strange droppings, like those of a horse, at the foot of trees. The rifle-bird, its velvety plumage as multicolored as a jewel, flashed, and the lyre-bird floated, volplaning gracefully with its daintily spread tail. Jungle-hens moved guardedly through the ferns. The spiny anteater attended its eggs as zealously as any bird, though it could dig its way out of sight as if it was sinking in the dirt. The duckbilled platypus swam with its webbed feet in the pools beneath water-lily leaves twice as large as dinner-plates.

It was the jungle, kin to that of New Guinea, a flora of vast antiquity, beautiful to look at, hard to conquer.

In its depths all was dark, damp, though exertion brought instant perspiration. Gazing upward, bedded for a rest on moss, they saw the treetops flooded with the brilliant sunlight, sifting down through the upper boughs, the rare glimpses of sky looking like blue fire. Like flame too the red and blue kingfishers, the great butterflies—blue and green—showing against the unlightened green like spangles on dark velvet. Frilled lizards with heads of astounding ugliness peered at them like malicious elves, moving like ghosts.

Sometimes it poured with the heavy torrential rains smashing down through the thick thatch, literally cascading from the tree tops while all the streams turned to roaring rapids, all life vanished, the gloom deepened to obscurity and it seemed as if their clothing would melt upon them. Dango and Morbora groaned in their disgust at the rain upon their naked bodies and insisted upon the apparently hopeless task of building a fire. In their eagerness to get warm they disdained the proffer of matches. Morbora took out of his hair, waterproofed by the beeswax of the corroboree make-up, two pieces of light wood about a foot long, one round, taken from the black fig, the other half of a split branch of the cork-tree. Dango grubbed inside a hollow tree and found dead and dry fungus, bark scraps and dust, bringing them to the place that Morbora selected, seemingly the only dry spot in all the forest; a deep crevice between two outcrop ledges, wide-mouthed enough for this action with the sticks.

The straight stick was twirled rapidly between the hands from fingertips to wrist, boring into the softer wood. Smoke came in a few seconds and then fat red-hot sparks fell out of the borehole with Dango blowing at them, deftly piling on his fuel, fetching more until there was a brisk fire burning in the little cave, the rocks throwing out a cheerful warmth in spite of all the rain.

The naked blacks got warm first. Vitality was swiftly lowered and to the whites the wet clothing seemed as if it had been soaked in ice water. Dango and Morbora took it in turns to fetch rubbish from hollow trees and leaves from the lawyer-palm, creeping about the tiny fire like kittens, fanning the smoke on to their bodies to get the warmth.

The downpour ceased, save for the drip from burdened foliage. Jeweled beetles came charging out of the forest recesses, bird notes began to be heard and Dango, suddenly stiffening like a pointer, went off bent double, coming back with both hands full of jungle-hens' eggs, four times the size of those of an ordinary hen.

The appetites of their hunter guides were insatiable. Repletion was an unknown condition and, if Morbora was renowned for being *ammeri*, it could be only because no one had noticed Dango's habits.

With holes punched in the sides, the eggs were put on the hot ashes until they boiled and the contents spooned out with a chewed brush made of cane. The eggs were apt to be well along toward hatching, and, having brushed out the whites, they crushed the shells, stripped the down from the incipient chicks and laid them on the coals before they devoured them, head, claws and beak.

Nothing came amiss to the savage larder. Grubs from logs, crisped in ashes until the fat larvæ bubbled as they browned. Cole tackled some of these and found that they tasted like eggs, others like a nut salad. Reynolds followed his lead and confirmed his opinion; but they were too much for Petrie as were the wood-beetles and the grasshoppers, scorched to get rid of wings, legs and shells and then picked like nuts. Dango, with a handful of hoppers brushed out of the ashes, ate them as avidly as a boy in the bleachers devours his bag of peanuts.

But all the eggs were not bad and there were luscious crawfish in the pools, speared with a stiff palm branch sharpened at one end, retaining the fronds. They got pigeons almost as they wished with both blacks encouraging the use of the shotguns—to drive away the forest devils and impress other tribes with the powers of the white man. The lizards were delicate, the jungle-hens not to be despised though inclined to be tough. With camp-bread and coffee and wild honey they lived well enough, saving their supplies.

Invariably Dango and his fellow made bowers for night sleeping. They lit a fire at every halt no matter how warm the weather and they ate every waking moment that they could find food.

On the afternoon of the fourth day they came out upon a ledge of the mountain they had been crossing. Across a steep cañon another ridge rose abruptly. The lay of the land was beginning to resemble the teeth of a comb, a constant clamber up through jungle and a slide down. But where they emerged the slope below was a wild, broken mass and, far below, dark and restless water flowed.

THEY were tired with the day's struggle through the scrub. The heat was weakening and the vines had been especially vicious. Cole had stumbled into a shrub with heart-shaped leaves and fruit something like raspberries that had turned out to be a sort of stinging nettle. His right arm, from fingers to armpit, felt as if it had been scalded and there was a rash on one side of his face with the eyelid swollen so as to hide the eye entirely.

It was a hard place to choose for camping, with no possible chance for lying in a horizontal position, but Cole was nearly done up though he had not complained and they elected to halt. Dango balked.

Down in the depths where the dark river rushed between great rocks, he said, the monster Yamina lived. It devoured men, he swore, and Morbora backed him, saying that men who slept near the stream had been eaten and once, when a dance had been held there, a dozen men and women had mysteriously disappeared.

Moreover the evil spirit Kvingan haunted the place and both devils were invulnerable.

According to Dango both possessed innumerable eyes, sharp claws and could run so fast that no one could escape them. Their long lips were fastened to their foreheads with strings. Because of them the blacks constantly changed camp whenever the voice of Kvingan was heard looking for them and calling to Yamina.

"*Kollê!*" * Morbora cried suddenly. "*Kollê!*"

The sun was setting in the gorge and its light turned the dark stream blood-red and stained the naked rocks through which the tempestuous water poured.

A strange, melancholy note, profoundly sad, came up from the shadows of the abyss. It was mysterious enough to color the legend and the two blacks distinctly changed color, like chameleons. The glossy brown faded to dead gray and their eyes rolled in their sockets. As if aroused by the sound the tree cicadas set up a loud shrilling which Dango declared was the manifestation of Yamina. They were all doomed.

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*Be still.

He squatted down with his head tucked between his knees, the personification of despair, surrendering himself to a fearful death while Morbora, his teeth chattering, tried to crawl into a hollow of the rocks.

The sound came again, the same sort of bell note they had heard once before at the camp on the river. Dango and Morbora shuddered, moaning.

"What do you suppose it is?" Petrie asked. "A bird?"

"It's got their goats, whatever it is," said Reynolds. "We've got to go across there tomorrow and these chaps are ready to bolt. I'll start a fire, maybe that'll hearten 'em up. Better fire off a couple of shells. That braces 'em."

The reverberating explosions brought only a fearful movement of two heads twisted into masks of fear. Dango and Morbora were completely demoralized. They shuddered almost continually and whispered together, the blood seemed to have retreated permanently from the pigmentary cells and their skins were pallid, even when the fire blazed up. For once they did not make any bowers for themselves or the whites. They refused to eat and they did not even smoke.

"They're in a blue funk," said Reynolds anxiously. "They'd make a bolt for it if they weren't afraid to go anywhere. We're going to have a fine time getting 'em across that ravine tomorrow. It's miles long."

"It'll all look better by sunlight," said Petrie. "It's a creepy sort of place by this light for anyone. The sort they call wildly romantic. And when that bird, or whatever it is, cries out it does sound like a lost soul. There it is again."

The melancholy single note, magnified by the echoes, came up from the depths and the two blacks cowered closer. It ceased and, with the swiftly falling night, they heard no more of it.

Cole had the first watch. Despite his arm, with its constant irritation, sleep seemed to rise against him in waves of infinite drowsiness through which he clubbed his way back to consciousness like a swimmer through heavy surf. He considered that more than usual precautions were needed. The blacks were in superstitious mood and there was no telling which way their shallow brains might work—very possibly to a solution of the problem by slaughtering the whites, taking their goods and fleeing from the spot they considered haunted.

Now and then he brought himself up with a start, feeling he had lapsed. Beside him Petrie and Reynolds slept like dead men and he envied them.

At last he caught himself with his head fairly nodding and the shame of it was like a dash of cold water in his face. But Dango and Morbora were in plain sight, squatting with their backs to him, seemingly making some sort of a line with string that Dango manufactured from grass or bark fiber, rolling it in the inside of his thigh under the palm of his hand while his fellow worked at noose or net.

Glad to see that they had to some measure recovered their self-possession, Cole decided they might be contriving some sort of a charm, a snare against Kvingan and Yamina, perhaps a cord, to be stretched about the camp like the hair lariats extended against rattlesnakes.

His time was up and he roused Petrie with difficulty. The artist seemed to be in almost a stupor, looking at him drunkenly. But he started to smoke and Cole rolled over, instantly deep in slumber, his arm forgotten, diving into profound depths of soothing sleep.

Petrie found his smoke tasteless. Like Cole, he had to battle against an increasing drowsiness and, like Cole, he found himself nodding. He seated himself against a boulder and the next thing he knew his head had fallen back against the rock with an impact that brought him back from oblivion. Stung from his failure to keep awake, he got to his feet, struggling to lift eyelids that seemed turned to lead, his brain sluggish, and resolved to pace a sentry go.

He whistled to Perro and the dog failed to respond. The two blacks were not to be seen or heard and they usually snored lustily enough to be heard for half a mile. Then, half-way down to the gorge, he saw the pulsing reflection of a fire, faintly but unmistakably radiant behind a great rock. Petrie's mind was a mine of haphazard information. In a crisis, like this, it proved useful. Instantly scraps of witchcraft lore came rafted on the floods of remembrance—propitiatory sacrifices!

The next instant he was racing down the slope gun in hand wide awake. He had taken his shoes off for ease in sleeping and now his unprotected feet gathered bruises as he struck the rocky ground but they made his progress noiseless until a small stone went tinkling down. A figure was silhouetted in the glow of the fire. Then another, rising from kneeling pose. Petrie was filled with hot rage. He was positive that they had in some way captured Perro who, though he had never become friendly with them and persistently kept to windward of them, had learned to loftily tolerate them. If he had seen Cole's vision of the pair of scoundrels weaving cord he would have been more certain. They were going to offer the white man's dog to Kvingan. Then they would hide all traces, throw the body into the river most likely.

The figures bobbed down again and Petrie shouted at them and fired his gun over the rock. Twice, the bright flashes stabbing the night, the sharp cracks flung back and forth by the cliffs.

The two blacks sprang up with a yell, guilty, assured that the white man meant to kill them to avenge their stealing of his dog. They raced up towards the wooded ridge and Petrie, without thinking, gave them another shot overhead to speed them on their way. Next moment he had rounded the rock and was kneeling beside Perro, trussed with all four paws bound and drawn close together, a wide-meshed net over him like a bag, a noose of barktwine tight about his muzzle and a chokenoose about his throat.

He lay on a flat stone in front of the fire and beside him was Petrie's own clasp knife—open.

Perro's stump of a tail wagged and his dark eyes gleamed welcome to his master. He licked Petrie's hand as the muzzle was cut away and nipped at him delicately with his front teeth. Freed, he stood close, weight against Petrie's leg, head up hard to his knee, expressing his delight, his preserved faith that he would be rescued.

THIS for a moment to show his love and gratitude. Then, with a deep growl of hate, he started after the two blacks and came back unwillingly to stand with his neck hackled, the stiff fur on his spine raising, barking furiously after them. Petrie's only fear was that they might kill him with spear or *nolla-nolla* till Reynolds, Cole back of him, appeared on the scene.

"What's the idea?" Reynolds demanded.

His tone nettled Petrie a little. They were all a bit on edge with the toil of the jungle trip, the unvoiced but none the less rankling suggestion that they might not be able to find the gold as readily as their first sanguine spells of go-fever had made it seem possible.

"What are you firing at them for?"

"I wasn't firing *at* them, though they deserved it. They stole Perro. Had him muzzled and bound up ready to butcher him with my own knife. Sacrifice to their devil-devils, I suppose. I went to sleep and woke up just in time. Another minute and I'd have been too late. But I couldn't keep awake somehow."

"We're up in the cart now, for fair," said Reynolds. "They've run off and we're in wrong with the blacks from now on. More than that, I'm none too sure where we are. Pretty expensive shots, Petrie, I'm tellin' you."

"If I hadn't fired when I did they'd have cut his throat. I wouldn't lose Perro for all the gold in Australia."

"I didn't know this was your gold mine to trade," said Reynolds. "Ask me and I'll say you've ditched us, proper."

"I can take my dog and start the back trail at daylight, if that's the way you feel about it," retorted Petrie hotly.

Reynolds walked away and Cole went up to Perro and talked with him for a minute before he spoke to Petrie.

"Tom'll cool off," he said. "He's worried. Hasn't said anything much to me but he's bothered more than he'll let out about whether he finds the gold again or not. You see he'd been bumped on the head with a *nolla-nolla* that first time and he was pretty well out of his head when the patrol happened on them. He's not quite certain whether it was one or two days, even, before they were picked up. Remembers that part of it vaguely and now he's let the suggestion get into his noodle that he may have brought us on a wild goose chase. The trip through the mountains the last two or three days has shown him how easy you can get lost. He figures he's responsible and he's worried. I know him better than you do. He didn't mean that about the dog—or the mine. Don't handle him too short, Petrie. He'll come through."

"Coming now," said Petrie, his voice good humored again as Reynolds started back toward them. "I savvy, Jim Cole. You're a good scout."

"Look here," said Reynolds frankly. "I'm a plain —— fool, Petrie. Didn't mean that. I'd have done it if it had been my dog and shot at 'em into the bargain. I'm worked up a bit over whether we're going to find the gold, that's all. Those blacks are so anxious to say what they think you'll like they lie like sixty. Dango swore he knew the lava hills I spoke of, but you can't trust 'em. May have been aimin' on losin' us up here, getting us ambushed by some tribe and lootin' the camp. If I've bilked you two——"

"Let's talk it over in the morning, Tom," said Cole. "We're all pals in this. We'll find the gold if it's to be found. It's stationary and we can keep moving. We play partners, win or lose."

"Till the grub gives out," said Reynolds. "Dango said the desert was over the next ridge. We'll find out if he lied about that or not tomorrow. Ought to be high enough to spot my hills. Maybe it's all right."

"Sure it is," Petrie slid an arm casually about the Anzac's shoulder as they went up-hill with Perro beside them. "Dango and Morbora may come back."

"Not them. If they do it'll be stalking us to cop our grub and swear Kvingan gobbled us. I'm not kidding about that end of it."

"Look here," said Cole suddenly. "Those beggars put something in our tea last night to make us sleep. My arm ached like mad but I couldn't keep awake and then Petrie here had the same experience. They must have got hold of some herb. Probably meant to kill us after they'd sacrificed Perro."

"It might be," Reynolds assented. "I know I slept like a dead mule."

The crest of the ridge they had passed was glittering in the sunrise, tufted palms standing out, flashing like a myriad mirrors in the wind. But the gorge was swathed in mist, twisting and rising in steamy vapors, writhing along the course of the river making the crossing difficult and dangerous.

They were forced by prudence to wait until it cleared before they tackled the problem of getting to the far side. The black water ran deep. From up-stream there came the thunder of a cataract, lower, furious rapids persisted. There was no timber closer than the ridge behind them and to get down a tree wide enough for a bridge would mean the felling of a giant almost impossible to haul to the water's edge, impossible to get it stretched across.

They stood looking at the rushing torrent gloomily.

"Swimming wouldn't do us any good here," said Petrie. "Wonder where Dango figured on us crossing? Maybe there's a ford."

"I don't believe Dango had any idea of getting across at all," said Cole. "Why should they lead us straight to the place where they knew there were devils?"

"They made all that yarn up when they heard that noise last night. I don't believe they were ever here before or knew anything about the place. That talk about the dead men and the corroboree was all bull. Looks like we're stuck."

Reynolds stared despondently at the obstacle as he spoke. The steady swish and boom of the stream and waterfall seemed to mock them. Then, with a mournful cry, a bird with long legs and mottled plumage flew up current.

"There goes last night's banshee," said Petrie. "Looks like a bittern. Come on, let's go up-stream. It may narrow down above the fall. Cliffs won't be so high anyway."

His guess proved true. The water, concentrating for the drop, ran in a gut some fifty feet wide, eddying here and there, hinting at depth, but untroubled by rocks, traveling fast and purposefully. The surface was within two feet of the rocky bank on which they stood. Cole caught sight of some driftwood lodged and jammed against a lateral crevice, two big logs of whitened trees, the bark gone, left there by the last freshet. He went to examine them more closely and stood there inspecting them with a frown. They were gums, buoyant, unrotted and with comparatively few boughs, most of which were broken.

He was trying to evolve a clear recollection of something he had seen and idly noted—in France, he fancied—a memory that was like a fogged negative refusing to yield a distinct picture.

Had he seen it or had some one told him about it? A ferry—a manless, oarless, powerless ferry worked by the tide, downstream on the ebb, up on the flood.

He had it. The image flashed clear. Supremely simple. Ax and rope needed and they had both.

"Kicked up a stray diamond or two?" asked Reynolds at sight of his face. "Or found a boat? Not that I want to tackle that in any —— barge."

"I've got a raft. Come on you chaps. Back for all the rope we've got—and the ax. We'll try it out first with rocks. We'll get over all right. Have to leave the rope behind us and I won't guarantee our getting back but we'll get across this trip."

They looked at him dubiously but got to work trimming off the boughs and hacking through the trunks. The result, after three hours sweating toil, gave them two lengths of log averaging eighteen inches in diameter and ten feet in length and two of lesser circumference. These they bound into a compact raft with short lengths of line aided with stout vines fetched down from the scrub. On it all three and the dog could ride at a pinch with the baggage. But Cole proposed to make two trips of it, explaining his ferry system.

"One long rope anchored on this side," he said. "Load her with rocks to steady her for the first trip and let the current swing you over in an arc. Anchor's the center of the circle, over we go like the spoke of a revolving wheel. Haul it back for a second trip. That's going to be the hardest part."

They pounded him on the back for his idea with Perro barking his meed of applause.

"Saw it on the Sacramento River," he told them. "Simple enough. First principles. Never would have thought of it myself though. Let's eat and smoke and then try it out."

Cole chose—as engineer in chief—a place where the rope could be secured without chafing opposite a shelving ledge that rose from the water. They passengered the raft with loose boulders and launched it. The current gripped it, swung it evenly across, landed it easily on the slant. Hauling it back was not so easy. The water tugged at it but the wood was light and two of them handled it. Petrie with Perro and most of their equipment made the first trip without accident and he sat smoking on the opposite bank kidding them as they snaked the raft back and laboriously up-steam to the full extent of the rope for their own voyage.

They were over, with the loss of most of their rope, which was a nuisance, necessitating the substitution of vines to make up their bundles. They had to tote their baggage up in their arms almost to the ridge before they could get these. Thick jungle-scrub faced them. It was steamingly hot and they were tuckered out, too tired to attempt the crest that night.

But their spirits were high again. They had overcome one obstacle and other difficulties diminished correspondingly.

* * *

THE torrent was between them and the two blacks, a circumstance that pleased Reynolds.

"They are frightened from having been fired at," he said. "They're scared at what we're liable to do to 'em for tryin' to make a sacrifice out of the dog. Just the same I wouldn't put it over them to track us and try to do us up some dark night. They're a revengeful, treacherous breed and they know just what we've got. On the other hand they may talk about it for a day or so and then forget about it."

"They'll have to come up-wind. Perro never was friendly toward them," said Petrie. "Now their smell represents death to him and he's got a memory if they haven't. Give him a sniff of them and he'll tell us all about it."

"They savvy that," Reynolds rejoined. "And they'll come up-wind. They sure smell worse than a scared skunk, but you remember the chap that came on us by the river camp to take us over to the corroboree. Perro didn't smell that fellow and we didn't see him until he was right there in front of us.

"They've got any dog skinned themselves for following a trail. They've got noses just as good. If they think there's a ground mouse in a hole they drop down and smell the dirt at the entrance or pick a little of it up. I've seen 'em tell when an animal was up a tree by smelling the crotches of the boughs or the dirt at the foot of the tree, even the moss."

"Bloodhound could do that," suggested Cole.

"Bloodhound can't chew a *kamin* out of a vine and climb up a tree to take a looksee.

I may be wrong but I've got a hunch we haven't seen the last of Dango and his pal."

The fog was too dense the next morning to attempt reaching the top of the ridge, anxious as they were to do so. The jungle-scrub was too thick and the mist too heavy. It cleared at last and the sun shone, dazzling on the wet foliage. There were a lot of enormously tall fern palms that looked like masts set with green topsails. It was a humidly hot morning and the birds were silent, but the cicadas kept up an incessant and monotonous humming in the tree tops while the three toiled on, sweating under their packs. They were approaching the arid and desert regions where they would have to subsist on what food they carried.

Close to noon they began to see patches of blue sky ahead, looking like smoke, mottling the forest, sure sign that they were nearing the ridge. Tired as they were they hurried, Reynolds ahead, with anxious face.

The almost vertical sun beat down upon a landscape that seemed the acme of solitude and desolation, a marked contrast from the forest, in the grateful shade of which they still stood. Close by was a small pool studded with blue water-lilies, enameled with the great leaves on which a brown bird like a long-legged thrush walked serenely in quest of water-snails.

The trees had thinned perceptibly but they were still thick, vineclad and deep in ferns where they came to an abrupt ending on the verge of a rocky slope that plunged downward in steep declivity to masses of gray and brown, sun-scorched trees, stiff of limb, scant of shadeless foliage, undulating like a sea, fading away at last into a belt of lavender which Reynolds declared was spinifex scrub and desert sand. Out of the lavender wash there lifted here and there masses of slate-colored hills, low but of fantastic shape, their outlines pulsing in the heat that vibrated all over the dreary outlook.

These were the lava outcrops. Not three but five of them in sight, miles apart and miles away from where they stood. In one such mass Reynolds had seen the gold—spattered in the reef like plums in a pudding!

But was it one of these five—and which one? To reach any was a perilous journey. Blacks lived there and there must be food and water though the prospect looked hopeless. The food would be black man's unpalatable, indigestible, unsavory stuff. The water-holes would be almost impossible to find in such a wilderness, likely to be guarded by unfriendly natives.

Without water? The memory of their thirst on the *Adventurer* was still lasting keenly.

Reynolds looked almost hopelessly from one lava formation to another, evidently at a loss for choice, hesitant to come to a determination. Yet his eyes shone with a strange glitter, as did those of Cole and Petrie. They had come to the last stage of their journey, the stage which was to bring them fortune. Youth was too buoyant to accept failure because of opposition; the go-fever quickened their blood and they gazed with quickened heartbeats.

Gold!

The bright sun suggested it. It was as if a voice came out of the hazy horizon and the wind insidiously bore its whisper to their ears.

Gold! The key to the world's pleasure box.

They had come far indeed and they had taken their hurdles. Barely a week back and they had been drifting inside the Barrier Reef, sun scorched and derelict. Now they had entered the straight. It was still an obstacle race, there was something grim about the brown and gray woods and the lavender wash that meant the spinifex and sand, but their spirits surged to surmount the difficulties as a blooded horse sets shoulders into harness when the hill rises in front. They were game. Adventure lay ahead with a golden prize for reward, the yellow seed of the desert, the precious sesame that should open all doors.

They were young and life was very good.

The light still shone in Reynolds' glance when he called them into frank conference.

"Look here, you chaps, I'm up against it. I hate to think I've brought you out here on a wild goose chase, though it's the goose that lays the golden eggs we're lookin' for. Mebbe I got carried away a bit by enthusiasm. Seemed once I'd found that gold it'd be easy to do it again. I may have made a big mistake tryin' to find it by the back door.

"Down on the level there, those lava clumps are all out of sight of each other. You can't see far through the porcupine grass, there's haze and there's mirages. The stuff grows in bunches about ten feet through and it's hard going. You keep a general direction by the sun but it ain't a straight line of march by a jugful. We saw only three. Up here there's five sets of lava and four of 'em are paired off.

"I've felt right along once we hit the top of the ridge where we are now we could see the three sets of hills, pick the third, strike a bee-line for it and it would all be hunky-dory. Besides, so far, we've come the easiest road. Now I'm stuck because I was too —— cocksure of myself. I may have let you in for a fizzle.

"We ain't got none too much grub. If we hit the wrong hills——"

"We'll hike back," said Cole, "get a grub-stake and try the rest till we strike the right one. Shucks, Tom, you're not the first prospector had a hard time relocating. We're all present and having a good time, I reckon? How about it, Petrie?"

The artist scanned the prospect.

"Looks like the betting is fairly even," he said. "I'd call it fifty-fifty. If Reynolds and his pal came in from the south, worked north and made the find in the third set of lava jags out there, it ought to be one of those two farthest north. I vote we toss up to see which of the two we tackle."

The five upthrusts lay like this as they gazed west.

"Good idea," said Cole.

Reynolds face lightened.

"I think you did the wise thing coming in this way," Petrie went on. "We get a chance for a bird's-eye view at the layout. Suppose we'd come in south, hit the third—say the one nearest us, the eastern one of the pair farthest north. Suppose the gold wasn't there? Down in the desert, as Reynolds, says, you can't see far. We wouldn't know there was a twin to the third hill at all. We might hike back to the second—one of the middle pair. It wouldn't be there. That'd be on our way out, we'd naturally go back that route to take a look-see and then we'd think we'd missed the whole show. Reynolds 'ud be in a fine stew, beginning to think he'd never seen it at all.

"No sir, I think you showed mighty good judgment coming in as we did, good judgment right from the start."

Cole fancied that Petrie emphasized his approval to hearten Reynolds, though the argument was good. If so, it had its effect.

"I saw it all right," said Reynolds. "Found it once and we'll find it again this trip. Scads of it, fellows. Bright as polished brass. We'll toss a coin if you like but, why not tackle the nearest one first, nearest of those two to the north? I'll know in a jiffy if the formation's right. There are some caves there with figures chalked up in 'em—painted, maybe. Red and black. Done by the natives. Look like the sort of things kids draw on their slates. You know, stroke for the body and four more for arms and legs with the finger and toes all spread out and extra long. Round mark for heads. I remember how they looked and how the caves looked from the outside. They're on the west side of the cliffs. We'll find it. I just got leary for a jiffy. Fine sort of a bozo I'd look if I hiked you out there for nothing.

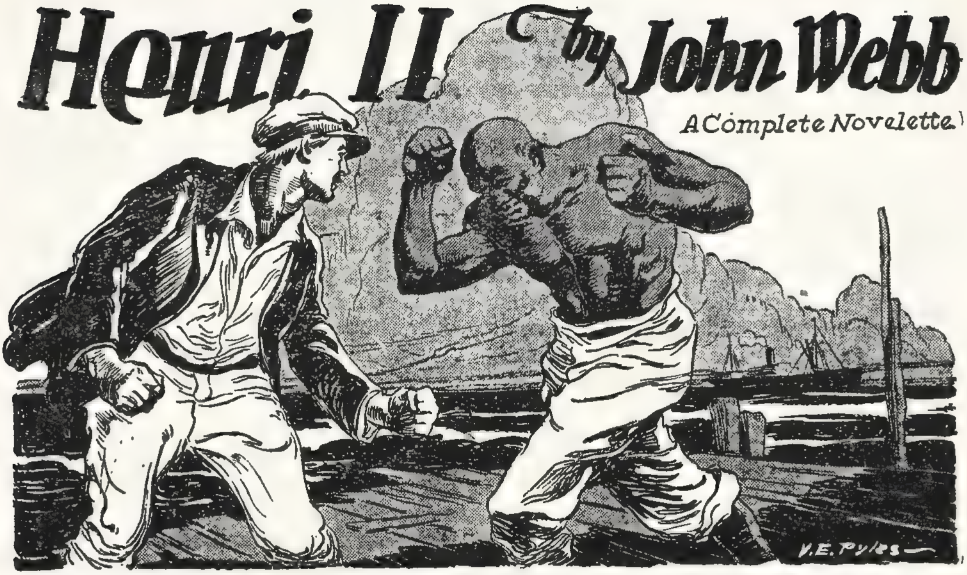
"Are we downhearted. No? Let's go."

TO BE CONCLUDED.

Henri II

by John Webb

A Complete Novelette



Author of "A Case of Silver," "Two Fools," etc.

THE time was 3 A. M.

The freighter *Hawk*, just come out of Tierra Baja Road, leaving Tortuga low on the horizon astern, steamed on a course of S.80 E. through the fresh tropic night. At regular intervals a pin-point of white light flashed on the horizon ahead.

Captain "One-Two Mac," somber, quick-moving, little man, pacing the ship's bridge with restless strides, glanced overside, then aloft; then pausing beside Mr. Scott, the second mate, he said:

"I think the weather's going to hold clear, mister. I'm going to lie down for a while. Regulate the speed so that we'll have Cape Haitian abeam by six o'clock. Call me when the light bears south magnetic."

"Very well, sir," said Scott, nodding; and then—"Just a minute, cap'n—here comes the wireless man with a message, I think."

The wireless man came from aft, over the boat-deck, through the passageway outside the officers' quarters, and when he arrived on the bridge, held out a paper to the captain.

"What does it say?" asked the captain sharply.

The operator repeated the message from memory:

"S. S. *Hawk*.

"Master: You need not make the Cape. Have decided not to ship logwood New York.

REYNOLDS."

Captain Mac swore softly.

"How did that message come?" he asked.

"Cape Haitian to Port au Prince radio station by telegraph, sir, and relayed to me by the S. S. *Cristobal*, in the Passage."

Again the little captain swore.

"You see, sir," went on the operator, "it's these mountains along the coast. Sometimes I can get Port au Prince from here and sometimes I can't. And there's been a lot of static tonight. Port au Prince has been trying to get me since last evening."

"Huh! I wish he had succeeded," said Captain Mac. "We wouldn't be a hundred miles off our course if he had.

"What'll you do, captain?" asked the second mate.

"Keep on, now that we're this far. We'll probably be able to pick up enough cargo to pay expenses."

He turned away, and saying, "Don't forget to call me when the Cape's abeam," went into his room.

Three hours later the *Hawk* rounded Cape Haitian, stood in toward Point Picolet, and left on the port quarter the white water swirling over the reef that tore the bottom out of Columbus' flag-ship, the

Santa Maria, over four hundred years before. Well into the harbor she went, then stopped and backed slowly, and the anchor plunged downward in seven fathoms of water.

The night breeze had died with the rising of the sun; the surface of the harbor was like a sheet of crinkly green tinfoil. A boat was putting out from the landing; it got clear and came creeping over the water until Captain Mac, watching casually from the *Hawk's* navigating bridge, saw that there were two occupants, one, a negro, at the oars, and the other, a tall brown man, sitting in the stern-sheets.

The boat swung about under the *Hawk's* stern, came alongside, and the tall brown man stood up and hailed—

"Aboard the *Hawk!*"

"Hello!" answered Captain Mac, studying the man's face, trying to recall where he had seen him before.

"May I come aboard? I wish to speak to the master."

"Come ahead!"

The brown man came swiftly up the pilot-ladder that was dropped over the side for him, leaped lightly from the rail to the deck, and came up the bridge-ladder to Captain Mac.

"Ah! Captain McGuire!" he said in a low, smooth voice. "A pleasure, my dear captain!"

He smiled and bowed, and held out his hand.

The little captain's brows knitted for a moment; then his face cleared and he said:

"Oh, yes! Now I remember! Your name is Cordaline. I met you in Port au Prince some time ago."

"Exactly, my dear captain!"

Captain Mac remembered Cordaline perfectly now, and knew that he did not like him; remembered too that there were rumors that the quadroon was not really the genial, honest gentleman he pretended to be. He was of the class of Haitians that term themselves *gens de couleur*, a class that holds the negro in open contempt. He was tall and strongly-built; his face was broad with high cheek-bones and a thin slit of a mouth; his eyes were small and darting. His skin was a pale chocolate color.

"What a pleasure it is to see you again, my dear captain!"

Captain Mac shook hands with him, none too cordially, and said nothing. He was a blunt, out-spoken seaman, was One-Two Mac, and he could not feign pleasure at meeting a man whom he really disliked.

"But as great as the pleasure is, it isn't that alone that I have come to see you for," said Cordaline.

"No?"

"No. We shall do business, also, you and I."

"That's good."

"Yes. I understand that your vessel is only about half-full of cargo?"

"And how did you 'understand' that?"

"Why, I—I—that is—" Cordaline seemed confused for a moment, and his darting eyes searched the little shipmaster's face; then he caught himself and went on as smoothly as ever: "Anyway, it is so, isn't it? Yes. That means, then, that you still have cargo-space for about fifteen hundred tons of cargo?"

"That's right. I was to take fifteen hundred tons of Reynolds' logwood, but I received a wireless message that the shipment was cancelled."

"Ah! Then we shall surely do business! I have coffee, cotton, dye in barrels, and sugar, fifteen hundred tons in all, ready for shipment. I will go ashore, immediately, complete arrangements, and my barges will be alongside your vessel in an hour——"

"Don't be in too big a hurry," said the captain. "Reynolds is a friend of mine and I think I owe it to him to verify this cancellation. There may be some mistake. I'll have to see him before I accept anything in place of his logwood."

"My dear captain, is that necessary?" The quadroon's eyes narrowed and a cunning expression came to his face. "I am anxious to see my shipment aboard your vessel. It is very important. You are a business man, eh? Then so am I. I will make it profitable to you as well as to me. I will pay you a—bonus. A bonus, yes. Just between you and me, a private transaction."

Cordaline was too anxious, thought Captain Mac. The quadroon had the reputation of being a relentless business man and a close bargainer; why, then, did he offer a bonus for cargo-space which, possibly, no one wanted but himself? Besides, the little captain didn't like the expression on the brown man's face.

"No, Cordaline," he said, "I'll see Reynolds first."

"But I offer a bonus, captain. A good big bonus. Let us say——"

"No." Captain Mac shook his head.

"You will not accept my cargo?"

"Not until I see Reynolds."

"But, my dear captain—" Cordaline thrust his face close to the captain's and touched the little man on the arm with his finger—"you *must!*"

"*Must?*"

"Yes—*must!* I, Henri Cordaline, say so! Do you understand?"

"Perhaps. But I don't agree with you."

"Captain, I tell you that I can force you to do as I say. My friend, in the district *du Nord* and *du Nord-Ouest*, and in Artibonite, those who know will tell you that Henri Cordaline is a power! Perhaps you have heard rumors of my power——"

"I have heard that you are a *caco* leader, if that is what you mean."

"Ah! Captain, you must accept my cargo—immediately!"

"Get off the ship!"

"What! Why I——"

"Get off the ship. Lively now! Get along!"

Captain Mac caught Cordaline by the arm, swung him about, and roughly propelled him toward the ladder.

The quadroon wrenched free, drew himself haughtily erect, and with a white silk handkerchief lightly brushed his clothes where the captain had touched him; then, his eyes darting angrily from beneath half-closed lids, he bowed mockingly.

"*Adieu, mon capitaine!*" he said, and he swept off his Panama hat; then he turned and went down the ladder.

The captain smiled after him; but his smile was a crooked, one-sided one, the mirthless fighting-smile of One-Two Mac, the bucko.

THE forenoon is always the hottest part of the day in North Haiti; and Torkel Larken and "Big" Malley, A. B. seamen of the *Hawk*, sweated at the oars as they pulled the captain's gig toward the landing. In the stern sat "Cockney" Allen, the boatswain, steering, and beside him sat Captain Mac.

"Tork, yuh square-headed ——, don't grunt so," said Allen, wiping his forehead with a faded red handkerchief. "You mykes me sweat just to look at yer!"

The surface of the little bay shimmered under a broiling sun. Tall palm-trees drooped languidly along the shore. Far to the southward, atop the "Bishop's Bonnet," three thousand feet in the air, the citadle of Christophe, one of the greatest examples of primitive engineering known to man, rivalled only by the pyramids of Egypt, stood out against a cloudless azure sky. There the despot Christophe, "Henri I," had shown the world what could be accomplished by a strong arm and a ready sword. There he had slaughtered and maimed, while his poor black creatures, by brute strength, dragged huge blocks of granite up the mountainside from the plain below. Now, people said, the citadel was a rendezvous for *cacos*, the bandits who were conducting a guerrilla war for the freedom of the Black Republic. Soon, whispered the natives, the *guerre des cacos* would be in full swing, the blacks would rise throughout the republic, and they would wipe out *les blancs* as their fathers had done before them, under Dessalines the Liberator. All they needed was a leader, a Dessalines or a Toussaint l'Overture, then "Haiti for Haitians; death to *les blancs!*" would be the cry.

Captain Mac, as he gazed up at that monument to the driving power of fear, thought of the rumors he had heard along the coast, whisperings of a mysterious leader who was gathering the reins of revolution, and he wondered.

"Wyke up, youse blokes!" grunted the boatswain. "D'youse t'ink th' cap'n wants to sit 'ere under th' bloomin' sun hall th' blasted dye?"

The two big seamen cursed deep in their throats, then shut their eyes to the fierce glare from the water and threw their weight savagely on the oars. The small craft leaped over the water toward the landing. From the landing a lone black man, sitting atop a ten-foot-high pile of logwood, watched them interestedly.

The gig bumped against the landing in the shadow of the pile of logwood, and the black man, an evil expression on his stupid face, peered down at them.

"I don't want you people to go too far from the landing while I am gone," said Captain Mac, one foot on the bottom rung of the ladder that led upward to the stringpiece. "I don't know how long I'll be, so keep an eye open for me."

"Aye, sir," answered the boatswain, touching the visor of his battered semiuniform cap. "We'll wyte fer yuh by th'——"

He stopped, threw himself suddenly backward, and cried—

"Look out!"

A dyewood log, ten feet long and nearly a foot in diameter, tumbled from the top of the pile above them, grazed Captain Mac's arm, and crashed through the bottom of the boat, sending the four men floundering in the water.

"That black —— —— on top o' th' pile did it!" cried the boatswain, striking out for the landing. "I seen 'im!"

Three long strokes and the little captain was beside him, and they scrambled together up the ladder. They divided, when they reached the string-piece, so as to get the negro between them and cut off his escape.

The black, now in the grip of a sudden fear, dropped from the top of the pile, ducked around one end, then, as he saw the furious cockney coming toward him, doubled and ran toward Captain Mac, whom he no doubt thought the less capable of the two.

Captain Mac halted, and waited while the black came on, then, as the man reached him and put out an arm to thrust him aside, he side-stepped and put out a foot between the negro's. The black flew sidewise in the air, half-pinwheeled, and dived face first to the landing. He rolled over and over, finally gained his feet, then half-ran, half-staggered from the landing. He threw a frantic glance over his shoulder, and they saw that one side of his face was raw and bleeding.

"I'll tear 'is rotten 'eart out!" growled the boatswain, starting after the negro.

"No, let him go, bose," said the captain, catching the cockney by the arm. "It may have been an accident."

"Like —— it was! I seen 'im, sir. 'E looked down at you, then 'e pushed th' log orf the top o' th' pile. I seen 'im do it, I tells yer, sir!"

Captain Mac pursed his lips and murmurred, "H'mm!" Then he smiled his queer one-sided smile.

A hail came from the shore-end of the dock—

"Hey, you, Cap'n Mac!"

A big, sandy-haired, pleasant man, swung out on the landing. He reached the captain and, smiling, held out his hand.

"Hello, Reynolds," said the captain, and he took the other's hand. "I was on my way to see if I could get in touch with you."

"Yeah? Saved you a trip then. I came down to see how they were making out with my logwood, but it's just as I expected—it hasn't been touched. Last night I left word with the loading-boss that the barges were to be loaded and sent out to the *Hawk* first thing this morning."

For a moment Captain Mac stared at him, then he slapped his thigh and exclaimed:

"I knew it! Then you didn't cancel your shipment!"

"Cancel it! What the —— are you talking about? If you knew how anxious I am to see it on its way to New York, you wouldn't be talking such —— nonsense!"

Captain Mac took from his pocket the message he had received eight hours before, and handed it to Reynolds.

"Read that," he said.

"Well, I'll be ——!" said Reynolds, staring at the message. "I didn't send that! 'Have decided to cancel shipment!' Like ——! No, I never sent that! But I know who did!"

"Who?"

"Well—" Reynolds looked at Captain Mac for a moment, then, apparently satisfied, nodded and said: "Cordaline. Know him?"

"Yes. What's it all about? I'm mixed up in it, whatever it is, and I'd like to know who's who and why."

He told Reynolds of the quadroon's visit, and then of how the log had fallen, or been thrown, from the top of the pile, narrowly missing him.

"I noticed your clothes," said Reynolds, "but I thought you merely had an accident."

"Do you think there's any connection between Cordaline and that log nearly breaking my neck?"

"I don't know, of course, but I'd bet my last nickel there is! Yes, sir! That's just the kind of trick that would occur to him. If the log didn't kill you, it would cripple you and put you in the hospital, and delay the *Hawk;* then I'd be as bad off as ever. You see, the idea is to keep my logwood from getting away before a certain day. I'll tell you about it— Here, let's go where we can get a drink and get out of the sun."

Together they left the landing and entered the town.

Cape Haitian, were it not for several scores of other Haitian towns, would be the filthiest and most wretched town in the world. It is not alone the carrion- and garbage-littered streets, the ramshackle, thin-walled, window-glassless shacks, the half-naked, smelly black women who sit thigh-deep clawing over coffee berries destined for American consumption—it is not these things alone that sicken and disgust: There is an air, an atmosphere of filth, degradation, and wretchedness, that, once experienced, is never forgotten. Men who know it call it the *smell* of Haiti. It is the very essence of evil, of pollution, of depravity.

"Haiti!" grunted Reynolds. "Of all —— holes, Haiti is far, far in the lead. Haiti with its Christophes, its Guillaume Sams—and its Cordalines!"

"What do you mean?" asked the captain.

"Come in here and I'll tell you," answered Reynolds, indicating a small café that was somewhat more inviting than the others in the vicinity. "It's kept by an Irishman who chose Haiti rather than an English jail, and it's the only place in the Cape that's fit to drink in."

On the threshold Reynolds paused and glanced back the way they had come; then he nodded knowingly, smiled faintly, and asked—

"D'you see that *griffe* coming along the street about half a block back on the other side?"

A short, squat, dark-brown man, a three-fourths negro—a *griffe*—was loitering on the opposite sidewalk. He was one of the army of Haitians that are afflicted with the terrible elephantiasis, and one ear was swollen to the size of a small ham, and swung pendulum-like as he walked.

"That nigger's been following me about for nearly a month," went on Reynolds. "Some night I'm going to get 'im in a nice dark corner and just naturally kick —— out of 'im. He's a *caco*; his name is Simon and he's one of Cordaline's cutthroats."

They entered and chose a table in a corner.

"Morning, Paddy," said Reynolds to the fat man with a stubble of red beard who nodded to them from behind the bar. "A bottle of Irish Moss on the table, eh, Paddy?"

"The rale owld stuff, sorr, bottled in Belfast," said Paddy, and he came from behind the bar and placed a bottle and glasses on the table. "Ye'll be drinkin' ut straight, sorr, with a bit o' water for a chaser?"

He glanced out of the corner of his eye toward the door, then said—

"Just a ha'-minute, sorr, an' I'll be with you."

Without again looking toward the door, he walked slowly to the bar and took from it a wet bar-towel. With the towel held carelessly in one hand, he strolled to the wide door that opened on the street. Then, with a sudden lunge, he reached around the casing and dragged into sight the *griffe*, Simon, who a few minutes before had been on the other side of the street. He held the *griffe* by the throat with one big hand and soundly slapped him left and right across the face with the wet towel. Satisfied, he turned the *griffe* about, kicked him deftly into the street, threw the towel after him and came back to the table, grinning and wiping his hands on his apron.

"I seen 'im watchin' ye from round th' door, sorr," said Paddy to Reynolds. "Th' dirrty haythen'll be stickin' a knoife betwane your ribs some foine noight, I'm thinkin'."

"Paddy," said Reynolds, "this is Captain McGuire, of the *Hawk*."

"I've heard o' you, sorr," said Paddy, putting out a big fist to the captain. "A foightin' man ye are. Eyah! 'tis a gr-rand foighter they say ye be!"

"Tell the captain what you think of Cordaline."

"A-aggrh! I nivver, nivver, could, sorr; but I'll troy." And soul-searing black Irish curses rolled from his mouth.

"And that ain't all, sorr," he said, pausing at last. "No, not b' th' distance from England to heaven it ain't!"

"And what do you think of the *caco* situation?" asked the captain, smiling.

"O-ooh! there's a foight brewin'! Eyah, yes! 'Tis my opinion there'll be foightin' from end to end of th' republic! All over Haiti they're talkin' an' schamin'. In Mirebalais there's this, now, Charlemagne Peralte—a blood-thirsty murtherer! In the Artibonite district there's Papillon an' 'Tijacques, an' in Grande Rivière and th' Cape we've Cordaline, —— take 'im! th' smartest o' th' lot. He's a slick wan, this felly Cordaline! He's th' bhoy to make a rale bloody foight of ut, 'f they give 'im toime!"

"That's right," said Reynolds, nodding agreement.

"But look ye, sorr, 'tis not Paddy O'Shay they'll be worryin'!"

The Irishman went behind the bar, reached under and held up two wicked-looking, blue U. S. Navy sixes.

"I was born and raised in a foightin' country, an' 'tis not me as'll be runnin' when th' foightin' begins!"

"D'you see what's coming?" said Reynolds grimly, turning to Captain Mac. "As Paddy says, there'll soon be fighting from end to end of Haiti."

"But where do you fit in?" asked the captain. "What has your logwood got to do with Cordaline and the uprising?"

"More than you would ever guess. You see, I've got a ten-year lease, with an option to buy that I'm going to take up, on two thousand acres of the finest land in Haiti. Figuratively speaking, the soil is gold, and a scientific agriculturist, with the proper money backing, could realize enough in five or six years to put the whole of Haiti on its feet financially.

"You may think I'm exaggerating, but really, Cap'n Mac, I've an empire! The lease has run three years. I haven't had money enough to work the entire holding, but nearly a year ago I decided to branch out. Part of my land was timber, logwood, you see, and I decided to cut the logwood and sell it, so that I'd have money to put in coffee and cotton and sugar. But I didn't have cash enough to even market the logwood. Y'see, I had put about all I had in the lease and was trying to do business on my nerve alone.

"Anyway, here's where Cordaline comes into it. I didn't know him well at the time, and he had me tied up before I knew it.

" 'Here,' he says, 'let me lend you money to market your dyewood; then when you realize on it, you can pay me and put your profits into extending your planting.'

"His terms were very reasonable, and I fell; I borrowed his money and put up my lease and buildings as security. Since then I've had nothing but trouble. My tools have been stolen twice; my negroes have been scared off time and again by the *cacos;* my sheds have been burned. Then, after I got my logs cut in spite of everything, the dyewood mill refused to grind and boil the extract from my wood on the grounds that they had more work than they could handle. I learned later that Cordaline had an interest in the mill. After that, of course, I could do nothing but ship my wood to the States. Do you understand now?"

"You mean that Cordaline wants to foreclose and take your plantation?"

"Of course! My wood must be on its way to New York in three days, or I'll not receive payment in time to meet the mortgage. It's almost due, you see. Cordaline's game is to delay things as much as possible. That's why he tried to turn you back from the Cape with that fake wireless message. But it didn't work, and when he saw the *Hawk* coming in, or got word of it, he went out and tried to bribe you into giving him the cargo-space."

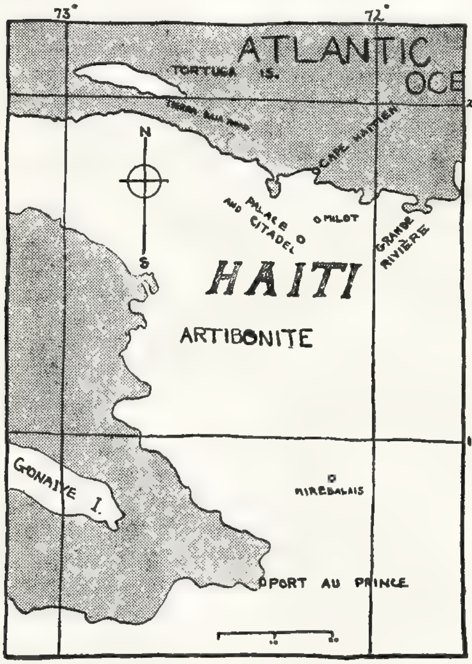
"But if Cordaline is behind the coming uprising, as you say he is, and if he is so sure that he can drive out the whites, he could take your land by force. Why should he try to get it by foreclosing a mortgage?"

"Cordaline is an intelligent man; he isn't like Charlemagne, who is merely a stupid black cutthroat. Charlemagne wants to start hostilities immediately; and if he does, the 'revolution' will be over before it begins. The *cacos* are poorly armed, they have practically no equipment and but little ammunition; they are not organized, merely roving bands of brigands.

"Cordaline is an educated man, a graduate of the Sorbonne, speaks five languages; he knows history and something of military strategy. He is doing all he can to hold Charlemagne in check; for he knows that the 'army' needs equipment and organization—and money.

"It is a question which of the two has the most hatred toward the whites, but Cordaline is too wise to let his hatred run away with his judgment. He is keeping quiet and playing the part of a *zandolite*, a *bon habitant*, while Charlemagne is frankly an out-and-out bandit, a *caco*. Thus, while Charlemagne is hiding in the hills, Cordaline is walking about town and mixing with the best society of the Cape and Port au Prince. He is waiting, and building an organization. He wants money.

"How, then, can he get money? Through export, d'you see? Give him my two thousand acres, with the other land he has picked up here and there, and he'd be able in from five to ten years to start a first-class little war. Haiti has a population of over two and a half million; and you can't figure them the way you would in a civilized country because every boy of twelve is a grown man ready to bear arms. Lots of them are married and have two or three kids by the time they're fifteen.



"Cordaline, as intelligent as he is, is firmly convinced that he can drive out the white population and keep them out. He reasons that they drove out the Spanish, drove out the French, and drove out the English; why, then, can't they drive out the Americans? The United States is no stronger, comparatively, than France was in 1797. Haiti is a country with a history, a history written in blood; a Haitian never feels that conditions are natural unless there is pillage and murder and rape going on about him, and Cordaline—well, I think Cordaline intends being 'Henri II.' "

"But how about the Marines, and the *gendarmerie;* aren't they on the job?"

"The Marines are the most efficient organization in the world when it comes to finishing a thing, but when it comes to preventing it, that's something else. Every native shuts up like a clam when a uniform comes in sight. They suspect Cordaline, but you can't put a man in jail because you suspect him. He is a *zandolite,* I tell you, and has a *bon habitant* card. So, you see, a lot depends on whether or not my logwood gets on its way within three days."

"It will," said Captain Mac. "We'll be loaded and under weigh by tomorrow night."

"I hope so. But Cordaline is slick; we'll have to watch him!"

A tall young American, wearing the uniform of a lieutenant in the *gendarmerie d'Haiti,* appeared in the doorway. He looked at Reynolds and then at Captain Mac, and then advanced with outstretched hand.

"H'lo, Cap'n Mac," he said. "I thought I'd find you here with Reynolds."

"Hello, Gordon," answered the captain. "Sit down."

"In a minute. Business first."

"What's the business?"

"You, Cap'n Mac. You're under arrest!"

The lieutenant placed his hand on the captain's shoulder.

"Yeah? That's good," said Captain Mac, laughing, and he gave the young lieutenant a dig in the ribs with his forefinger.

"Oh, I mean it," said Gordon, his face serious. "You're under arrest!"

Captain Mac, seeing the other was serious, frowned, and asked—

"What's up?"

"You are under arrest for assault and battery on a citizen of the republic of Haiti, one Paul Leroux, a native negro in the employ of Henri Cordaline. There! Now I'll sit down and have a drink on you!"

"Say, are you really serious about this?"

"Bet your life I am! The local veterinary's been picking splinters and gravel out of that fellow's face for the last two hours. And listen: You know darn well a civilian can't get away with handling a *gook* like a Marine can; now, why in —— didn't you send for me? Cordaline preferred the charge in Leroux's name.

"You are to appear before the local *juge de paix* at nine o'clock in the morning, tomorrow. You'll be fined five *gourds*—one dollar. Until then you're a prisoner-at-large, on my responsibility. How about that drink?"

"Well, I suppose I can borrow a dollar," said the captain, sitting down again.

"Sure," said Gordon, grinning. "If you can't, tell 'im you'll owe it to him. 'S all right."

Reynolds, who had been frowning blackly at nothing, suddenly leaned forward and banged his fist down on the table so that the glasses jumped.

"It's not all right!" he exclaimed. "No, by ——, it's not all right! Don't you see what's in the wind?"

Captain Mac, perplexed, stared at him.

"Don't you see?" insisted Reynolds. "Tomorrow when you go to court the case will be postponed, and the same the next day, and the next. The magistrate is Cordaline's man. He won't dare go against his boss. You'll be held here awaiting trial, your ship can't sail without you—and neither can my logwood! D'you see now?"

"H'mm," murmured Captain Mac, his brows knotting. "Can't we force matters some way?"

"Maybe," said the lieutenant thoughtfully. "I'll send a good, strong telegram to the Marine Commander in Port au Prince and see if I can get him to hurry things. I'd let you go entirely, but—well, I can stretch the laws sometimes, but I can't break it. We'll wait till morning, and if the case is put off I'll wire."

"And if you can't make a telegram strong enough," said Reynolds, "I'll go to the capital myself. In my flivver I can make it there and back in a day and a half."

IT WAS one o'clock when Captain Mac returned to the landing. The gig, a hole in its bottom and the starboard gunwale smashed, had been hauled out of the water, and the boatswain and his two men, each with a quart bottle of German beer, were sitting upon the string-piece speculating whether or not the boat could be repaired. A barge had been hauled alongside the landing and a half-score of natives, under the direction of a charcoal-black loading-boss, were leisurely loading it with logwood from the pile. A heavy-duty power boat lay alongside the barge in readiness to tow it out to the *Hawk*. A beggar, his face a mass of open sores, his eyes closed and his withered limbs twisted beneath him, half-crouched, half-sprawled, on the hot sun-baked planks of the landing and whined monotonously—

"Gimme fi' cents; my mama he sick."

Captain Mac hired a native to take them out to the *Hawk* in his dugout; and an hour later the barge, loaded with logwood, was brought out by the tow-boat. The booms were swung overside, the winches clanked, and draft after draft of logwood came out of the barge and disappeared in the *Hawk's* holds. The ship's seamen were at the winches; the natives were on the barge and in the holds; and the sharp orders of old Tenny, the down-East chief mate, could be heard from end to end of the vessel as he harried the workers to increase their speed.

But the work was slow, very slow. And accidents began to happen one upon the other. A draft of logs slipped from the sling, fell into the water and, logwood being somewhat heavier than water, sank slowly from sight. One draft became inexplicably jammed on the barge, and the winchman, not being able to see overside, merely obeying the motioning of the black signalman, gave his winch full steam. The fall parted and the draft of wood fell with a crash into the barge; and the boatswain, cursing furiously, was forced to send a seaman aloft to reeve off a new wire whip. Again, a wire topping-lift all but snapped when a cargo-hook "accidentally" caught under a beam while the winchman was hoisting.

Captain Mac, standing by No. 2 hatch, shook his head.

"Here, bosun," he said, "this can't go on. Don't you see these people are trying on purpose to cause trouble and delay the loading? Put Malley in the barge and Tork Larken in the hold. Tell 'em not to work, but to give plenty of orders and hurry things, and to see that nothing carries away. You do the signaling yourself and put this black gangwayman to juggling timber."

But the signalman objected to being put to carrying timber with the others.

"*Non, non, papa,*" he said stubbornly. "Me do signal; me boss!"

The boatswain caught up a rope's-end, threw an overhand knot in it, and started for the negro—but the man was gone, over the side and into the barge.

For the rest of the afternoon the loading continued at a fair speed, and with no accidents. The contents of two more barges was taken aboard before nightfall, leaving not much over a thousand tons of logwood on the barge to be taken aboard the following day.

THE next morning, at a quarter to nine, Captain Mac presented himself at the pink-and-blue wooden *hotel de ville* where the local justice of the peace held court. Waiting for him were Reynolds and Lieutenant Gordon.

"Magistrate hasn't shown up yet," growled Gordon; then he turned to a negro boy drowsing on the curb— "Here, you, run and tell that fat slob of a *juge de paix* to come here on the jump!"

The boy looked at him dumbly, and asked—

"*Aiti?*"

Gordon swore, and repeated his order in creole, and the boy ran off.

Soon the magistrate, a round, oily, little man, came puffing across the dusty, brown central *place* before the *hotel de ville.*

"Ah, M'sieur Gordon," he said in the high-pitched falsetto that Haitians use when they wish to show respect, "you are ver' earlee—no?"

"Where's that —— nigger Leroux?" demanded Gordon. "Get 'im here and let's have this thing over with!"

"Ah, no, that iss not possible—no." The magistrate rubbed his moist palms together and smiled soothingly. "This poor man, Leroux, is ver' sick. Yes. He is abed."

"Liar! Tell me where he is, and I'll drag him here!"

The magistrate spread his hands and lifted his shoulders, and a peculiar pasty gray spread over his brown face. It was plain that he feared Gordon, but just as plain that he feared some one else even more.

"I do not know where the man Leroux is," he said. "I simpl' have inf'rmation that he is ver' sick."

"Liar!" growled Gordon. "I feel like I ought to bust you on the nose!"

Reynolds caught the angry lieutenant by the arm.

"To —— with him!" he said. "The more you talk to him the less you'll know. What d'you say you send that wire to the Marine Commander?"

"All right," answered Gordon, and the three went across the *place* to the telegraph office.

"Colonel Roberts'll jump all over that pot-bellied J. P. when he gets this," said Gordon as he signed the message and shoved it across the counter to the operator. "We'll wait for an answer," he told him.

Reynolds walked to an open window, leaned on the sill and put out his head. There was a sudden scurry beneath the window, and a short, squat figure, one enormous ear swinging wildly, scurried off around the corner.

"My shadow," said Reynolds, and he smiled grimly.

In half an hour the answer came, and Gordon read it aloud:

"Colonel Roberts in hills. May be back tomorrow."

"Give me a blank," said Gordon; and he wrote angrily— "Find him," signed his name and tossed it over the counter.

In fifteen minutes the operator handed him a sheet of yellow paper. It read—

"Can't."

It was signed, as the first answer had been, "Seydle," who was the colonel's secretary.

"Now what?" asked Gordon. "It looks like you're on the fire, Reynolds."

Reynolds turned to Captain Mac and asked—

"By what time tonight will my wood be aboard, Cap'n?"

"Perhaps by eight o'clock. I'll keep 'em going till it's all aboard. If it wasn't for this —— assault and battery charge I could be a hundred and fifty miles on my way north by this time tomorrow."

"I'll wire again this afternoon and again tonight," said Gordon, "and again first thing in the morning."

"If you don't get an answer by tonight," said Reynolds, "I'm going to make a break for it with my flivver."

Gordon shook his head.

"I wouldn't advise you to do that," he declared. "It isn't safe. The bush is full of *cacos*, and I can't give you any men because I've got only enough to hold the town against a raid."

"No matter. I'm going to give it a try if you don't get an answer by tonight."

Captain Mac left them and returned to the ship.

All that day the loading continued, and with few mishaps. Big Malley, the seaman on the barge, used his hands and feet to good advantage and kept the natives working at the slow rate of speed beyond which a Haitian can not be driven; and Larken, the stalwart Dane in the ship's hold, stretched out a big black for furtively hooking the cargo-hook in a ringbolt while the winch was hoisting; so that between them and the boatswain and Mr. Tenny they drove the natives to doing about as much work as *gooks* are ever expected to do.

By nine o'clock, when Captain Mac went

ashore again, the loading was finished and the barges away from the ship.

He found Gordon in Paddy O'Shay's, and in answer to the question upon his face, the lieutenant shook his head and said:

"No word from Port au Prince. Reynolds started out an hour ago. I gave him an armed *gendarme* after all. He ought to be back by tomorrow midnight, with good luck. Cordaline was around town this afternoon. Saw him talking to the *juge de paix.* Some time I'll catch up with them two, and when I do I'll run 'em ragged."

"How about Leroux?"

"In bed. Native sawbones says he's too badly injured to appear in court and that the case will have to wait until he's better. He's another liar!"

"Well," said the captain, "I suppose the only thing to do is wait——"

There came the pound of a horse's hoofs on the stones of the street, and a voice called—

"Looten't Gawdon, sar?"

Gordon, followed by Captain Mac, strode to the door, and Paddy, his towel over his shoulder, came from the end of his bar. In the dimly lighted street a uniformed native *gendarme* sat astride his horse, and across the horse's withers hung the limp body of a man.

Gordon leaped forward and looked at the man's face.

"It's the man I sent with Reynolds!" he exclaimed; and then to the trooper—"Where did you find him?"

"On de road to Milot, sar. He am shot, an' ah t'ink he am dyin'."

"Why didn't you take him to the barracks, and send for a doctor?"

"Ah—ah didn't hab no ordaws, sar."

"Orders be ——! The man's dead! *He* didn't wait for orders! Did you see the white man Reynolds?"

"No, sar."

"All right; take Batiste's body to the barracks."

The trooper saluted, turned his mount, and clattered off down the street.

"I'm going after Reynolds," said Gordon, starting off.

"So am I," said the captain; "I'm going with you."

"So am I," said Paddy, and he ran within and reached over the bar for his navy Colts.

"Now, look here," protested Gordon, "you two haven't any experience in this kind of work. You had better stay in town."

"Be —— 'f I will!" said Paddy, and he slammed shut the front door of his place and snapped the lock.

Captain Mac said nothing, merely shook his head firmly and followed the lieutenant along the street and across the *place* to the *gendarmerie* barracks, where a sentry challenged them and, recognizing Gordon, passed them in.

Five minutes later they came out from the barracks yard, each mounted on a wiry Haitian pony, and Captain Mac with one of Paddy O'Shay's sixes in his waistband. The lieutenant led the way at a sharp trot out of the town and along the road toward Milot.

A big, round moon hung over the citadel, fourteen miles to the southward. The road, the road that had once been the "Emperor" Christophe's private boulevard, stretched out like a broad white ribbon ahead of them. Now and then they passed native *cailles,* ramshackle thatched huts, huddled back in the shadows of the trees that lined the road; and at one point they passed under something that hung by a rope or wire from a palm-tree that leaned over the road. A white, round object it was, and it shone brightly in the moonlight, and swung in the wind.

"Human skull," explained Gordon. "*Wanga*—Obeah charm—Voodoo. To keep evil spirits from travelers. Come on, now, let's hit it up—the road's good."

His pony leaped ahead as he slapped it with his quirt, and Captain Mac and Paddy, less experienced riders, found themselves hard put to it to keep up.

Gordon suddenly swung his pony to one side and plunged into the brush.

"Here's Reynolds' flivver," he cried. "I was looking for it."

He slid from his pony and, running to the car, began to examine it.

"Full of bullet holes!" he exclaimed. "One front wheel is smashed and so is the bumper. They must have built a barricade across the road, and then cleared it away and dragged the car out of the road after the fight was over. And here's blood! And here—" he turned over a body that lay on the ground beside the car— "is a dead *caco.* They leave their dead for the dogs."

He mounted again and rode to the road.

"I'm not sure which way we ought to go now, but we'll take a chance. Come on!"

Again the three ponies pounded off toward Milot.

Soon they came to a town, a dark gloomy town that lined both sides of the road. Nowhere could they see a light or a human being.

"Something's been doing here," said Gordon. "See how all the houses are barred and shuttered. They've had a *caco* scare."

They swept through the town and into the shadow of the huge mountain on top of which the citadel of Christophe stood out ominously in the light of the moon. The road mounted steeply, then ended, and they passed through a gateway between high stone walls. From far above them came the weird thumping of a tom-tom.

"Voodoo meeting," said the lieutenant. "They'll be wild raving maniacs before morning. It's the moon starts 'em—sets 'em crazy. If you think you're going to be captured, you'd better blow your brains out! If they get you alive and tie you up, the women with their knives make you look like something the cat found in the alley."

"Eyah!" said Paddy. "I seen a marine oncet! Wurrah!"

Now they were in the courtyard of Christophe's Palace of Sans Souci, where the black Nero had lived with a grandeur surpassed by few of the great monarchs of history. They left their horses here, and with Gordon leading, his rifle cocked and a cartridge in the chamber, mounted a countless number of broad stone steps, up, up, toward the point whence came the monotonous *tonk, tonk, tonk* of the tom-tom.

"Sounds like we're getting farther away from it," said Captain Mac.

Gordon shook his head.

"No. The closer you get to a tom-tom the softer it sounds."

At last they reached the top of the wide stairway, and turned into another, smaller, courtyard. The citadel, fungus-covered, silvery green in the moonlight, loomed above them. The mammoth fortress that Christophe had boasted could withstand a siege by the greatest armies of the world was now a crumbling ruin, cold and lifeless, and no sound came from it but the sighing of the wind through the great empty chambers and that never-pausing *tonk, tonk, tonk.*

Gordon suddenly tensed, then crouched low upon the uneven stones of the courtyard.

"Down!" he said in a low voice, and Captain Mac and Paddy crouched beside him.

A shadow moved on the other side of the court-yard; there was the glint of metal. Gordon threw up his rifle and strained to make out the outlines of the figure.

Orange flame burst suddenly from the darkness opposite them, sparks flew from the flagstones to one side, there was a resounding crash. Gordon's rifle barked once, twice, three times, and then there was silence. The tonking came no longer, only the wind with its deep moaning.

"He's got a handmade gun and he's using potlegs and barbed wire for bullets," said Gordon. "Tell by the sound and the flash. Come on—it'll take 'im ten minutes to reload." He started on the run across the courtyard. "They usually fire one shot and run, anyway."

Paddy stumbled and went to his knees—there came from somewhere above the high-pitched bark of a rifle.

"Got me in th' laig!" grunted Paddy.

Captain Mac caught the Irishman beneath the arms and dragged him behind a tree that stood in the center of the courtyard, the same *caimite*-tree under which the bloody "Henry I" had sat in judgment upon his unfortunate subjects.

Paddy tried to stand, but couldn't, and said:

"Th' —— just nipped me—but I can't stand. G'wan, now, an' let me wait here for ye."

"Did you see where that came from?" asked Gordon.

"No," said the captain, and Paddy shook his head.

The lieutenant studied the walls of the mighty fortress, and shook his head.

"It wasn't a native-made gun, I know that," he said. "It was a U. S. Marine Corps Springfield rifle. Now, who could be using a modern Springfield?"

"G'wan an' foind out," said Paddy. "I'm all roight where I am."

They hesitated, but as the Irishman insisted, went on across the courtyard. Seeing no sign of the man he had shot at, Gordon concluded he had missed, and they continued, passed out of the courtyard and along a narrow winding path that led higher up the mountainside.

The tropical vegetation grew so thickly here that in places the path was completely covered overhead, forming a sort of tunnel; and the growth was so intertwined that it shut out the light of the moon, and the tunnel through the brush was close and damp, and soggy underfoot.

They passed through a mango-grove, then a cluster of native *cailles*, and farther along, a banana-grove; then they came to the Citadel, and Gordon, pushing open an enormous wooden iron-studded door, led the way in between stone walls twenty feet thick. A draught of dank cold air rushed out at them.

They stumbled forward in the darkness, found a stone stairway, and began to mount. Flight after flight the stairs led upward, and at each landing there was a small square port cut in the wall, and beams of moonlight cut into the darkness of the shaft, partly dispelling it. They were both panting when they at last reached the top and found themselves in a great hall faintly lighted by the rays that crept in through the holes in the crumbling roof. Cautiously they went forward.

"I'm doing little more than guessing," Gordon whispered to Captain Mac. "I'm not sure that they brought Reynolds here, but I've known for months that this has been a *caco* headquarters and it seems the most likely place. If I could spare men from the Cape I would surround it and conduct a thorough search, but as it is we'll have to do the best we can."

"Lead on." answered the little captain.

Stealthily they went along the hallway until they came to a turn, where Gordon halted and listened. Ahead of them they heard a low cough, and the clink of metal on stone.

"Sentry!" breathed Gordon.

"Let's get 'im," answered Captain Mac.

Together, straining their eyes to see into the gloom, they crept around the turn, and after a few paces saw a black man squatting on the floor with his back against the wall, across his knees a heavy machete. He was half-asleep, and drowsily keeping time with his head to some refrain that must have been running through the thing that served him for a brain.

"Easy, now, cap!" whispered the lieutenant.

The bandit's ears, sharp as an animal's, trained from infancy to hear the slightest sound, must have caught up the *gendarme* officer's whispered words; for he straightened and leaped clear to the other side of the hall, then, evidently bewildered, not knowing what it was he had heard, or whence it had come, he crouched low and, his machete ready to strike, stared tensely in the opposite direction.

Gordon sprang forward with his rifle reversed to strike with the butt; but the *caco* whirled again, swung wildly with his long blade, missed—and Captain Mac's revolver barrel smashed down upon his thick skull and sent him to the floor.

"By ——!" gasped Gordon. "Cap'n you're as quick with your hands as they say you are! That *gook*'ll sleep for a while! Come on."

Ahead of them they heard the buzz of many lowered voices, as if a crowd were assembled, and could see a faint red glow that shone across the passage from an open doorway. Passing a short flight of stairs that led upward, they quietly made their way to the doorway and peered cautiously within.

THEY found themselves looking into an immense three-walled room; where one wall should have been was nothing but empty space. A six-foot-wide ledge jutted out from the side of the Citadel, continuing the floor of the room, and beyond the ledge, as Gordon surmised, there was a sheer drop of at least a thousand feet to the rocks below. This was the rampart from which scores of condemned blacks were thrown by Christophe's orders. From here had been thrown the European architects and engineers who designed and superintended the building of the fortress, so that the many secrets of the place remained with one man only—"Henry I."

Seated about a pile of glowing coals in the center of the room were some two hundred natives, men and women. They huddled close to one another, and shivered, for the night air was cool, and mumbled in lowered tones, and listened half-heartedly to a short, heavily-built, dark-brown man who talked steadily and vehemently from a point near the fire. The man was speaking creole, and Captain Mac, after listening for a moment, shook his head.

"That's Simon, the *griffe*, Cordaline's right-hand man," said Gordon, "and he is telling them what he has done to further the *caco* cause. Trying to put his right foot forward, I guess."

Several minutes elapsed, while the *griffe* spoke on, talking in a louder tone and becoming more earnest as he proceeded.

Gordon chuckled softly.

"He says that it was he that drove off the three *blancs* who were spying in the courtyard. He is denouncing Cordaline now; says that he is a coward and afraid to start the fighting. He says that the blacks of Grande Rivière, under himself, should join Charlemagne, and then they would have a —— of a lot of fun killing off the whites. He is telling them that there aren't many whites, and that there can't be many more where they came from, and that every one they kill is one less. Now he's telling how he captured Reynolds, and how if he had had his way he would have cut his heart out and given it as an offering to Voodoo, the venomless snake that looks after all good *cacos*. But he didn't say where Reynolds is— Hello!"

A tall, sinuous, yellow woman, clothed in scarlet and with a flaming red cloth wound tightly about her head, suddenly sprang from where she had been crouching by the fire. She threw her arms aloft and her head back and whirled twice around the circle, then she stopped, and plunging her bare hand in the fire, drew forth a glowing coal. This she held aloft while she uttered shrill, piercing, animal-like cries—

"*Wanga! wanga! wanga!*"

"She's asking Voodoo to send her a sign—a 'charm' they call it—showing that he approves of Simon being leader of the band instead of Cordaline," said Gordon.

A smell, the stench of burning flesh, filled the room as the yellow woman, her head back and her eyes closed, her bosom rising and falling, held the live coal aloft. With slight pauses she uttered her shrill cry—

"*Wanga!*"

The natives all leaned forward and watched her breathlessly, waiting for the sign. Simon drew from within his blue cotton shirt an Obeah vial, a charm, that hung from his neck by a cord, touched it to his forehead and muttered to it. A tom-tom began to beat softly from a point near the fire.

The moon, now far in the west, shed its rays into the three-walled room at an angle, and the yellow woman, in the faint light of the fire, stood out like an evil spirit against the dark sky. The red coal in her fingers shone with an angry redness.

The *mamamloi* — priestess — suddenly dashed the coal to the floor. Her eyes snapped, her lips drew back from her mouth and she spat out sharp, angry words at them.

"She says Voodoo wants blood—an offering," translated Gordon.

Simon, at the *mamamloi*'s side, joined her in denunciation of the man who was holding the Grande Rivière *cacos* in leash.

Simon abruptly ceased talking and faced toward a door at the left. The priestess followed his gaze, started, then, half-crouching, snarled catlike.

In the doorway stood Cordaline, the quadroon *zandolite*. He stood very erect; a Springfield rifle rested in the crook of his arm; his thin lips were twisted into a deriding smile. His eyes, a coldly humorous light in them, swept the gathering, paused for a moment on the snarling yellow woman, then rested at last upon the startled Simon.

"Ah! So the brave Simon will have no more of the cowardly Cordaline," he said mockingly, in English.

"*Non, non, papa!*" protested Simon, starting back.

Cordaline, still smiling, advanced into the room, strode out upon the ledge that extended out over space and looked down. He nodded; then his face hardened and he whirled about upon Simon.

"*Vini non!*" he snapped sharply.

Simon's face grayed; he backed slowly, protesting over and over—

"*Non, non, non, mon général!*"

The priestess cast Simon a look of scorn, then touched the Obeah charm hanging from his neck and whispered in his ear. Simon searched her face with pleading eyes, and she nodded.

"*Vini non!*" snapped Cordaline again.

Simon touched his charm to his forehead, and walked forward. No one could harm him now, the *mamamloi* had said so; the charm about his neck, backed by the power of Voodoo, would protect him.

With his Obeah vial held before him, Simon walked boldly out upon the rampart and faced the quadroon.

"Voodoo demands an offering?" Cordaline asked.

"*Oui, papa* ——"

The quadroon's rifle rose and fell: The butt drove into Simon's face. The *griffe* went to his knees as if his feet had been swept from under him; then he fell half-sidewise, rolled over the edge of the rampart, and hung there suspended by his arms over a thousand feet of space. He tried to draw himself to safety, but slipped and, with the protecting charm not three inches from his blood-smeared eyes, disappeared.

"*Une offrande pour Voodoo!*" said Cordaline softly.

A low murmur rose from the blacks gathered in the room. The priestess spoke to them, and solemnly they nodded. It was just, they agreed; a sacrifice had been offered, and Voodoo, the nonvenomous snake, the deity that dwells in the shadows, had accepted.

Captain Mac, peering over Gordon's shoulder from the doorway, put his lips to the lieutenant's ear.

"Shall we go get 'im—Cordaline?" he asked.

"No—wait."

Cordaline spoke for some minutes rapidly to the *cacos*, then he stopped and strode directly toward the doorway outside of which stood Captain Mac and Gordon. They had no time to hide; hardly had they time to press back against the gray wall when he was in the doorway. He came through the doorway, turned to go down the corridor—then stopped stock-still as the muzzle of Gordon's Springfield dug into his ribs.

"No noise, Cordaline!" warned the lieutenant in a low voice.

The quadroon, in one hand his rifle with the muzzle pointing toward the floor, turned slowly till he was facing them, then he glanced over his shoulder into the room where the *cacos* were still sitting about the fire. With his eyes smiling their ugly smile, he turned, and with his thin lips curling, said—

"I do not think you will kill me unless you have to;" and he deliberately pressed the trigger of his rifle and fired at the floor.

With the discharge of the rifle Cordaline threw himself backward and tried to bring his weapon to bear upon Gordon, but Captain Mac caught the barrel, bore down, and with the other hand swung at Cordaline's head with his heavy Colt. He missed, but kept so close to Cordaline that the quadroon could not raise his rifle, and together they went to the stone floor, where they rolled over and over, each trying to wrench the other's weapon from his hand.

"I'll take 'im!" snapped the little captain to Gordon, who was looking for an opening for the butt of his gun. "You hold the others off!"

Gordon put his rifle around the corner of the doorway and pumped five shots into the crowd of *cacos* rushing toward them, then, when they halted, he drew his automatic and turned their pause into a wild dash for objects to hide behind.

Cordaline was strong and determined, but he was not the experienced rough-and-tumble fighter that the wiry little bucko sea-captain was. He had always thought fist fighting beneath the dignity of a "gentleman of color," consequently his greater strength and weight did not give him the advantage it should have. Captain Mac lost his revolver, but he kept hold of the rifle barrel with one hand and banged away at the quadroon's face and body with the other. And these were no wild swings, these blows; they were crashing, blackjack-like smashes that put Cordaline on the defensive and gave him no time to retaliate. He got to his feet somehow, and let go the rifle to get away from that driving fist; but Captain Mac was at him in an instant, backed him against the wall and, smiling his crooked smile, punished him fiercely with both flying fists—*smack-smack, smack-smack, smack-smack!*

Gordon, jamming fresh cartridges in his Springfield, called over his shoulder—

"Can you handle 'im?"

"I think so," answered the little captain, grinning.

Cordaline tried to strike back, tried to grip the captain in his strong arms, savagely tried to kick him in the stomach, but to no avail—continuously those terrible fists thudded to his face and body, drove him back against the wall.

At last, when blood was welling from a half-score of knuckle-wounds on his face, he threw himself in desperation upon the floor.

Gordon again emptied his rifle into the band of *cacos*, again drove them back.

"What d'you say, cap'n?" he called anxiously.

"Let's go," answered Captain Mac.

He caught up his Colt and Cordaline's rifle, put the muzzle of the revolver against the quadroon's side, and said:

"Get up! That's right! Now move along ahead of me—and if you think I won't shoot, just hesitate!"

Gordon threw three shots from his pistol into the room, then turned and ran after the captain and his prisoner. At the first turn they paused while the lieutenant answered several scattered shots that came from the room they had left, then they went on to the stairs and plunged hurriedly down.

Down they went to the main floor, out of the fortress and along the narrow, tunnel-like path to the courtyard of the Palace of San Souci where Paddy, his revolver gripped in one big paw, still lay beneath the *caimite*-tree of Christophe.

As they came into the courtyard it became daylight, suddenly, as it does in the tropics. Paddy, seeing Cordaline's bruised and bleeding face, growled a curse.

"Wurrah, wurrah!" he groaned. "There's been a foight an' I wasn't there. Tell me, now, who's maullies did Misther Henri th' Second run into?"

"Cap'n One-Two Mac's," Gordon told him.

"Eyah! To be sure! I moight ha' known! An' what a g-rand lacin' ye give 'im, sorr!"

Gordon ran to the gate and looked back toward the fortress. Then he threw up his rifle and fired twice.

"Just to keep 'em from getting too bold," he said. "Now to business!"

He turned to Cordaline.

"Cordaline," he said, "tell me where Reynolds is!"

Cordaline's battered lips tightened and he shook his head.

"Oh, so you won't answer!" Gordon nodded grimly. "Well, I think we can change your mind!"

He slipped off his Sam Brown belt, weighted at one end with a heavy buckle, and swung it suggestively.

"What do you say?"

The quadroon's lips remained closed.

The heavy brass buckle struck the brown man soundly between the shoulder blades. He cringed, then started to run—but Paddy put out a foot and tripped him up. Again the buckle rose and fell, and this time Cordaline held up his hands, and cried:

"Enough! I'll tell! He's home, in Cape Haitian, in bed.

"What! In bed?"

"Yes. He's securely tied and gagged, but with the exception of a slight cut on his head, uninjured, I believe."

"The idea was to delay things so that Reynolds' logwood would be held up and you would be able to foreclose on his land, is that it?"

The quadroon remained silent.

"Answer!" snapped Gordon, swinging his belt.

"Yes."

"Who captured Reynolds?"

"Simon and his men."

"Where were you?"

"In Milot, having dinner with several officers of the Marine Corps."

"Fixing up an alibi for yourself, eh?"

No answer.

"Answer!"

"Yes."

"And Simon was obeying your orders?"

"Yes."

"All right. That's all. Cordaline you think you're clever, and you are—you're too —— clever! This time you put your foot in it. I'm going to take you back to the Cape and lock you up in the tightest little cell you ever saw!"

With Cordaline walking ahead of Captain Mac, and Gordon assisting Paddy, they made their way toward the spot in the lower courtyard where they had left the horses.

THAT afternoon Captain Mac and Reynolds, the latter with a bandage about his head, stood on the boat landing while the *Hawk's* whaleboat crept toward them over the pea-green surface of the bay.

"If you can get under weigh this afternoon," said Reynolds, "you'll have nearly a day to spare."

The little captain nodded.

"And listen, cap'n," went on the planter, "I want to try to thank you for all you did for me——"

"Shut up!" snapped the captain.

Reynolds grinned, and placed his hand on the little man's shoulder.

Toward them, from the town, came Lieutenant Gordon.

" 'S all right!" he called when he got within hearing distance. "Leroux, when he heard the news, forgot how badly hurt he was, jumped out of bed and started to run. At the rate he was going when I saw him last, he ought to be darn near in Santo

Domingo by now. The *juge de paix* made a run for it, too, and he's off in the bush somewhere. They're both gone."

"I'll be going too, then—eh?" said the captain.

"Go ahead;" Gordon nodded.

Captain Mac stepped lightly into the whaleboat and said to the boatswain:

"Return to the ship, bose!"

"Aye, sir!"

The boat was shoved from the landing and the six rowers bent to the oars.

"Looie," said Reynolds, "he's a —— good man to be friends with, Cap'n One-Two Mac!"

"Say!" exclaimed the lieutenant, "don't I know it!"

A half-hour later they saw the *Hawk* steam round Point Picolet and head for Crooked Island Passage and New York.

HOW RABBITS DROVE COLUMBUS TO AMERICA

by Thomas Dunbabin

OLD legends say that the Maoris were induced to find their way across the thousand miles of open ocean which lie between New Zealand and the South Sea isles by observing the flight of the migratory birds which come every year from northwestern America and northeastern Asia to spend the period of northern winter in the summer of the southern hemisphere.

Rabbits do not migrate across the ocean; but they have a far greater discovery to their credit. They drove Christopher Columbus to find a way across the Atlantic from the Old World to the New. No doubt a way to the New World would have been found by the Portuguese if Columbus had never been born. But without Columbus and the rabbits the history of America would have been much different.

Most sailors feel at times that they would give anything to leave the sea and settle on a farm. Columbus was no exception to the rule, but he went further than most seamen for he did actually turn farmer.

He had gone to sea as a boy of fourteen and ten years later, in 1470, he had an experience that sickened him of the sea. He was wrecked and reached the coast of Portugal, clinging to a plank. Then he settled down in Lisbon and there he married Filippa, the daughter—or niece—of an Italian named Perestrello, who had been a pilot in the service of Portugal.

Her dowry was the island of Porto Santo, far out in the Altantic near Madeira, which had been given to Perestrello as a reward for his services. Columbus and his bride went to Porto Santo, and he settled down there as a farmer. No doubt he intended to spend the rest of his life as a country gentleman, cultivating his island and making wine.

But he reckoned without the rabbits.

Some one had let them loose on the island and they increased to such an extent that they ate poor Columbus out of house and home, as they have eaten out many a farmer in Australia and New Zealand in more recent times. They nibbled up his crops and bit off the shoots of his vines, and after a struggle of a year or so he abandoned Porto Santo and took to the sea again.

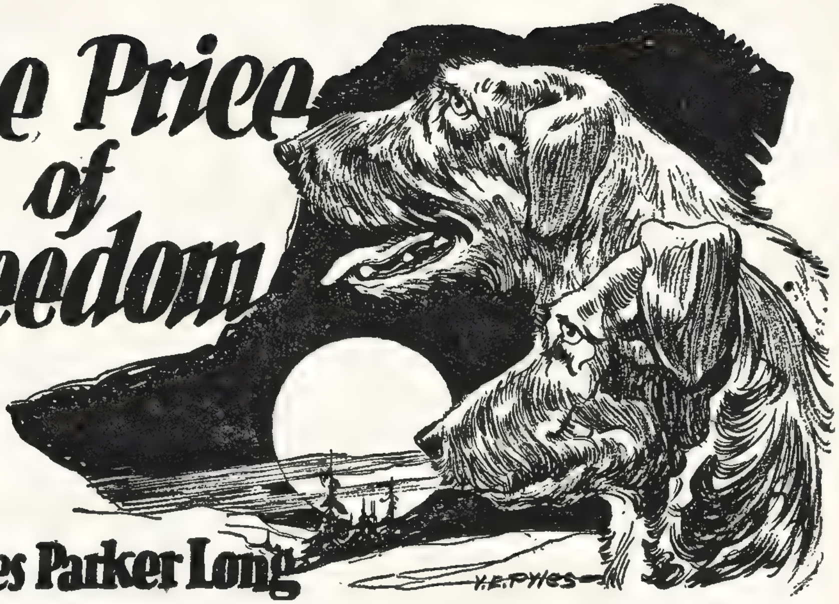
It was only after his losing fight with the rabbits, in 1474, that he conceived the idea of reaching India by sailing westward from the Canaries. It was in 1477 that he sailed (probably) to Iceland where he may have gathered some hints of the old Norse voyages to the coasts of North America in the 11th century. If the rabbits had left him in peace, his voyages would have been confined to a run over to Madeira or a trip off Porto Santo to catch enough fish for Friday's dinner.

October 12 the day on which Columbus made his first landfall in the West Indies, is still observed as Columbus Day in America. Yet no one gives a thought to the Porto Santo rabbits which made Columbus Day possible.

The Price of Freedom

by

James Parker Long



Author of "The Horse of Destiny."

THE clearing was edged with blue-black spruce save at one side where the road climbed through hemlock to pine and then to the open hardwoods on the ridge and turned south toward civilization fifteen miles away. In the little three-acre cleared spot there were two buildings, buried half-way to the eaves in the accumulated snow of the waning storm. Each had a chimney, but from neither arose any sign of kindled fire. The larger building was more than a hundred feet long and less than a fifth of that in width. Like its companion it was built of spruce poles, solidly chinked against the biting cold. Unlike its companion it was lined on one side with large yards enclosed in high, wire netting.

Inside the yards was gaiety and turmoil as the older puppies and yearlings pursued each other, yapping joyously, through the drifts, stirring up miniature snow-clouds. Within the kennel were the older dogs and bitches. Here the drain of impending motherhood, or insistent broods, had intensified the belly-pinch and the three-day fast had brought consternation. Nature's factories had begun to break down through lack of material and the whine of hungry pups was mingled with the excited and demanding barks of the matrons, as each in turn reared for the hundredth time against the walls of her pen and peered eagerly through the little windows toward the silent house.

One dog only was silent. On top of her nest-box in the largest brooding pen lay Sheila, the giant wolfhound. While the more active Airdales frolicked to forget the empty ache or querulously demanded attention, she lay in dignified repose and waited trustfully for the coming of Padraic, the master, who had never failed her.

Nor was she to be failed this time. In a rough board bunk within the single room of the tiny house lay Padraic. From the great heap of blankets which he had piled upon himself to replace the heat from the now silent stove, protruded a face and hands flushed with burning fever and marked with burst and discharging pustules. All night the room had rustled with his hoarse and muttered delirium, but with the coming of dawn had returned sanity and strength to peer hopelessly out at the road down which the Indian helpers had fled at the first sign of his disease and down which Dave should have brought help days ago. Then he turned to the book beside him to estimate the progress of his disease.

> In the form of variola known as hemorrhagic smallpox bleeding occurs from the pocks and from the various mucous surfaces. Here the prognosis is unfavorable and in spite of the best care the

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"The Price of Freedom," copyright, 1924, by James Parker Long.

death-rate can scarcely be kept below fifty per cent. in the unvaccinated.

Padraic read with a shudder and wiped his bleeding mouth. In all probability it was his death-sentence and he knew it; but he could not die with a kennel full of starving dogs. At least they must have a chance for their lives. For a moment he lay with closed eyes gathering his energy and then threw aside his bedding and rolled out upon his knees. With the aid of the planed, pine table, he dragged himself to his feet, groped for and found his flask, and tipped it skyward. For a moment or two he swayed till the raw liquor took hold, then he stumbled and spraddled toward the door.

The first stretch from the door to the meat room end of the kennel came easily. Buoyed by the first surge of the liquor in his veins he fell against the door, opened it full and fastened the hook so that it could not again close. The first quarter of beef he came to he tried to lift from its hook, but his strength was too small. Groping through the aisle of frozen carcasses he made his way to the inner door, swung that open and fastened it.

Here he had good walking and the walls between the pens for help, so that he was nearly through the long building and surrounded by leaping dogs before he fell. On his knees he opened the last doors, hurrying hysterically now lest any animal be left penned and helpless when his strength of mind or body should go. At the last gate, Sheila's, he was again alone. From the far end of the building came snarlings and mouthings as the hungry dogs tore at the frozen meat.

As he swung her door wide the great beast stood by his side, towering above him and looking with soft affectionate eyes at him, wondering at his position. He met her eyes, gulped, reached for the catch, swung open the outside door and faced the interminable ten-yard struggle back to his bed, able to die like a gentleman now that his duty was done to his dogs. By means of the jamb he clambered to his feet, but his third, feeble stride brought him to his hands again. In the deep snow he wallowed like a wounded animal. Then he saw the dog beside him.

"Sheila lass," he muttered, "ye always knew more than most men; can ye get me home?"

The giant bitch crowded close to him, lip curled at the sight and odor of his hideous face. He gripped her by a great handful of harsh hair and pliant, silky skin at the shoulder, hauled laboriously till he crouched, half-supported by her and commanded—

"Home, lass!"

The next he knew he was stretched on the snow, he was very near the house and the thing poking him in his ribs was the muzzle of the giant wolfhound trying to stir him to his senses. He was warm now and his skin no longer itched. He faced the fact of which that was the symptom without flinching and gallantly made his last effort.

As the beast and he dragged on he muttered endearments:

"Ah, Sheila, acushla! They told me the Irish wolfhound was gone. They told me that what few were left were degenerates and would never breed back. Ah, ha! Little they knew! I'm most done, mavourneen; another ten feet— Take care of your babies, lass. It's soft living that spoils the wolfhounds—ha, ha, ha! No danger that soft living will spoil your babies—and if hardship is good, you may have another Gelert in your litter."

Padriac's head was on the door-step at his last word. He tried twice, reached the string and with a last, despairing effort, swung the door open and dragged himself within.

Sheila would have followed but he ordered her out.

"No, girl—your job's begun—mine's done!"

The door swung to and caught. He slumped to the floor with a tired sigh.

OUTSIDE in the snow, Sheila sat a moment on her haunches and gazed from under bristling eyebrows toward the kennel-building. A great, shaggy, sandy-brown greyhound she seemed, but she was more than half a foot taller at the shoulder than any greyhound, stronger of frame and nearly three times as heavy. Her coat was of straight, harsh, unlovely hair and her face, save for the warmly glowing eyes, was the face of a fighter: jutting eyebrows, bristling beard and just the hint of ivory-yellow tushes between slightly curled lips.

The symmetry of her rangy, powerful body was marred by her approaching maternity; but in spite of that she might have sat for an ideal portrait of one of those great Irish wolfhounds of history who established the name of greatest wolf killers of the world, wrought until their island was free from the sneaking pest and then, with their occupation gone, gradually degenerated till only a few fanatics, among them Padraic, believed there was any hope of returning the breed to its glory.

She was Padraic's success. After a lifetime spent in raising the dogs the market demanded and as kennel-master in the hire of wealth, that he might have money to breed wolfhounds, he had, in her, attained his ideal; and within her rested his hopes for the future.

As it became evident that the door behind her would not again open, Sheila arose and swung with inimitable grace and dignity across to the door of the meat-room. It was full of the clangor of the feeding terrier-pack gorging full after the days of starvation. Shouldering her way through the snarls and yelps, she entered the main room. Through the open doors swept the icy wind. From one of the open pens before her slunk a young dog scarred with the wounds he had received as he was driven from the feed-room, and from his jaws dangled the limp form of the puppy which he had stolen for his meal.

Without a glance into her pen at the warm nest-box, all prepared to receive her offspring, she stalked through the other door and started to the gloom of the evergreens. That night she slept cold, but comforted by a great white rabbit which fell to her in a swift, silent chase and single snap of famished jaws.

The next night she dropped down a hillside into a tangled bottom of alders, birches and black ash. There was the scent of flesh in her nostrils and a half-mile brought her to the first trampled runway of a deer-yard. At her first rush the bucks faced her with striking front feet, but a yearling doe broke from the yard and floundered off into the snow. Within twenty yards she was down with Sheila's fangs in her ham. Another rip at her throat assured the silent dog of all the food she could eat for days.

Those days the bitch used in scouring the country roundabout and on the second she found a pine which had blown down. At its roots was a hollow, filled with drifted dry leaves from the ridge above. It was dry and sheltered but cold. Still it must serve. That night four pups were born and in the biting cold a single one had strength enough to wriggle to his mother's side and nurse.

The great beast had not been within the shelter of the evergreens more than an hour when a human figure appeared on the crest of the hill and came dropping down the road, wallowing through the drifts with long, weary swings of his bear-paw racquets. Before he reached the clearing another figure appeared, more fatigued, even than the first, in spite of the trail packed by the webbed shoes of Dave who had led all the way from the settlement through two days of howling northeaster, breaking trail and forcing the pace to the limit of human endurance in his effort to bring aid to the friend who needed it so much.

Without a look at the clamorous kennel Dave dashed to the house, pushed open the door against the resistant weight, swept the limp figure of his partner up into burly arms and laid him on the bed. Then he was back at the door bellowing from his great, black-bearded throat—

"Hurry, Doc! For —— sake, hurry!"

Already the dog-teams had topped the rise,, but he had no eyes for them. His eyes were all for the young doctor, struggling in on his trail, half-dead with trail fatigue and *mal de racquet*, but ready and willing to face the days of unremitting labor ahead if he might serve Padraic, his friend and the friend of everybody within fifty miles. The frontier doctor knows his tasks and the keen eyes had but to glance at the figure on the bed and feel for the all but non-existent heart-beat with numbed fingers. Then he started his three weeks' struggle for Padriac's life.

"Get this room warm. Where is your water?"

From his back he swung his medicine-case, stiffened fingers groped for hypodermic, a dash of raw carbolic on the arm bared by a swift knife-thrust, and a douse of alcohol to neutralize its burning—no time for fussy methods of sterilization—then in went the first shot of strychnin and a moment later the doctor's tired, unshaven face relaxed as the pulse welled up in answer to the heart-stimulant.

Three weeks later a wasted, pock-marked, little red-headed Padraic again opened conscious eyes and observed the two tired faces which bent over him.

"How's it with the dogs?" he greeted them.

Another week and the doctor summoned his Indians from their camp, and departed for the settlement, not racing on ahead of loaded sled, but riding the lightened one, conserving energy for the task of picking up the threads of the practise he had abandoned willingly and with the willing consent of his patients when word came of "Red" Padraic's need.

HE WAS hardly out of the house before Padraic turned to big Dave and demanded—

"Did ye get it?"

"Doc ordered me not to talk business for two weeks."

"To —— wi' the Doc! God bless him! I can be in no misery worse than what I am in, not knowing. Would he lend ye the gold?"

"No! and 'twas lucky at that. What with the indigestion from eating too much meat and the fighting and the pups that weren't born right, we're broke now."

The little red-haired Irishman rolled over till he faced the wall and made no answer, and his giant partner tiptoed ponderously about, tending to the household chores in a worried way, sensing the struggle that was going on within the still figure.

FIVE years ago that little man had walked out of nowhere into the little village of Fraser Creek with his face tinted purple and green with old bruises, and immediately his twisted smile had made a place for him in every heart there. While he had said no word of his past it was evident that he was a dog man, though not a dog man as dogs were used in that country. It was three months before he made an effort to drive a dog-team but before that time he knew and loved and was loved by every dog in the settlement.

Then Big Dave Carnehan was called to Winnipeg on business and hired Padraic to tend his place and his dogs. When he came back he found that team of half-bred malemiuts in such condition and working so well together that he entered them in the Red River Derby and was second man into St. Paul.

Padraic's success with that team established his place among us. He built a little shack and settled down. To him were brought dogs to train, to condition, to cure, and no dogs were failed.

None of us knew what he was thinking as he went about his business, till one day he refused to accept any more commissions. Then, when his building was nearly empty, he took Dave to one side and told him:

"Dave, I'm thinking you and I can make some money, raising dogs. Ye've a place up yon?"

"I have. All spruce and no way to get it out."

"You have also some money; so have I, not so much; together we can make a start. Terriers is the fashion now outside. The Airdale is the best of them all. He's the biggest and he's as much guts as any. We will build us a kennel on your place up yon, where no other dogs will come to bring germs and the like. I ain't boasting when I tell ye I'm a dog man. It's a fact, and if I hadn't been unlucky with the men I been with I'd be rich. Now I've found you, that likes dogs, and maybe I can settle down."

Dave said nothing. There was nothing needful. His heart had opened and received this vehement little fellow and now his duty was to follow.

"Then when we've made a start we will borrow money and buy some Irish wolfhounds. Ah, b'y, they's the dogs! As huge as three wolves, and the heart in each like an ox. The stock is most gone, but there's money for the man that brings it back and we would have the ideal place. Every six-months puppy that has not killed his deer and every sapling that has not killed his wolf we'll sell, and with the rest we will build up a strain such as never lived before."

The program had gone through as planned up to one point. The kennel had been a success. Then the dog man had wanted wolfhounds, and those that would serve were costly and the limit of their borrowing ability was soon reached. Fanatical optimism and blind faith had pledged the place. One of the high priced importations brought with her disease. The beautiful but inbred dogs one by one succumbed till Sheila alone was left with her unborn pups.

With them had gone public confidence, undermined by what seemed reckless buying. Dave had been out on one more futile effort to find even a handful of money to stave off foreclosure till the Spring crop of pups could find market. His failure and word of Padraic's straits, brought by one of the terrified, deserting Indians, had been simultaneous.

Fate's last stroke had been in driving the suffering Padraic out into the cold to release the starved pack immediately before aid could come. Their crazed gorging had wasted the food stored for the Winter and brought on sickness.

So long had the little man been silent that Dave sat on the bunk and told him:

"Don't you worry, Paddy. I can take the trailers and kill game to feed the ones we have left till fish come. Then they will shape up quickly and when they sell us out they will all bring something and we won't owe so much but we can pay it up in two or three years and start again."

Padraic rolled over again to face his partner and dropped a scarred hand on his knee with the shadow of a caress.

"No, Dave," he told him. "I have put ye in the hole as it is, and it isn't right to abuse the dogs that way. There is the man that will see the good of this place and such a pack as we have out there. He will pay enough for it, moaning the while, so that you can settle up and have, maybe, a bit left. If we wait for the sheriff, the dogs won't bring half what they's worth.

"They'd have had a hungry Spring, the game would suffer and we would still be owing. The drawback about a sale to this man is that I must be moving on. And since I must have a long start, considering the shape I am in, I will have to be leaving at once. Call John Dirty Skin Coat and I will arrange. Then I will leave you the name and address and a note telling how to be handling him when he comes."

Dave sputtered hopelessly. Padraic had long been his religion and he knew no way to refuse his commands. The next day the Indian struck out for the north where were no roads. Bound on his sled was the grinning Irishman waving good-by as they entered the spruce.

TWO weeks later a hired sled from the creek mushed in and deposited a loud-mouthed, purple-jowled individual who roared—

"I'm Hingham. Where is that —— red-headed Irishman?"

His traveling companion walked around him distastefully, and when they were in the house and had removed their outer furs to the accompanied roaring remarks of the noisy one, he was disclosed in a bestrapped whipcord uniform, belted with revolver and cartridges.

"I told him he would serve time," went on the monologue, "and serve time he shall."

"That is all right, Mr. Hingham," interrupted the officer. "We have no objection; but you must remember that we are not deaf."

The bloated personage stopped in full cry, looked at him a moment as if of a mind to argue. Before he could start, the same steady voice inquired—

"Where is this Padraic person?"

Dave's slow wits were having difficulty in keeping up. Here, though, was a situation he knew well how to handle.

"He went out by way of the Creek two weeks ago. He's been sick and said he was going to one of them sanitariums."

"Talk your business," said the officer to Hingham, "and we had better start back out. I told you he'd not be fool enough to wait for you."

That started the big voice off again. Hingham dived into the heart of his business.

"You Dave Carnehan?"

Nod.

"How much you want for the place, dogs, blankets, everything but the mortgages?"

Dave pulled out the slip Padraic had prepared for him and read the figure with fear and trembling.

"List of dogs?"

That too was ready, thanks to Padraic, as were the registration papers.

"I'll go take a look. No, you stay here. I know dogs. No one can sell me something I don't want."

He slammed through the door and out to the kennel.

As soon as he had gone the officer turned to Dave and said:

"Now that 'Pot Gut' has gone, tell me where Paddy really is. I have an earfull for him that will make him want to come along home with me."

A gap appeared in the forest with which Dave's face was covered as his mouth opened in amazement. Then it shut with resolution and he answered—

"He started out by way of the Creek two weeks ago——"

"Sure; and saying a thing twice makes it true. All right, Old Top, I won't bother him, or you either. Paddy always was the sort of a cuss that it was a pleasure to lie for. But I'll admit I was counting on seeing him. I was sure he would stick around to have a crack at friend Hingham. When he pulled him off last time he acted as if he would never be happy unless he could get his hands on that fat wind-pipe again. Still, I reckon you can give him the message."

Dave's broad, bearded face had grown more and more bewildered. It was laughable now.

"What?" he inquired, unable to centralize on any one thing. "What you mean about him and Hingham?"

"Didn't he ever tell you what we wanted him for?" chuckled the officer, craning his head to make sure that Hingham was not about to come in. "There was nothing to be ashamed of. He was working for this bloated piece of dog-meat out here as kennel-master. He came in one day and found his boss torturing a dog. We never knew just what it was all about, but Hingham let out that this pup had snapped at him, and he was getting back at him an inch at a time with jack-knife and a dog-whip.

"Paddy let out one yell and started in to give Hingham a taste of the same. It was pretty even for a while and Paddy got marked up some, but by the time he had got in two or three good swift kicks where Pot Belly lived, things swung his way. By the time we got there he was finishing off the job, hanging to his windpipe with both hands, and every now and then he would look at the pup and tighten up about an extra ten pounds.

"And all the while he was getting himself in deeper by yelling that he was going to kill him and damning him from top to bottom for a dog torturer. He certainly did make out a good case against himself of attempted murder. He was so excited that he could hardly walk when we pulled him off and took him down to the jail, but he went along all peaceable after he had seen that the dog had been cared for.

"They held him for the action of the grand jury and it looked kind of bad for him. You see, Hingham, he is the main guy in our county. He is lousy with money in the first place, and he knows how to make it work for him in the second. As quick as he got out of the hospital he began seeing that there wasn't any 'miscarriage of justice which would let the would-be murderer escape his just deserts,' as the county paper which Hingham owns so politely expressed it. Then the district attorney is a next-door neighbor and lodge-brother of Hingham's and 'Roaring' Joe can be mighty sugary when he puts his mind on it.

"Of course Paddy kept track of this, and when he saw that he was going to get the big end of the stick and no escape, he just simply turned up A. W. O. L. He did nothing rough. He just disappeared. All you need is a can-opener to leak out of our jail.

"Paddy hadn't any more than got out of town before things began to look a little different. Word had got around as to his excuse and everybody remembered what a white man Paddy was. It looks as if all he needs now to get off is a good lawyer. Ex-Senator Jeffers has been interested and he says he will come in and defend him for half of his usual fee of ten thousand. You tell Paddy that if he can beg, borrow or steal five thousand, he needn't be afraid to come back and fight it out."

Heavy tread on the door-step announced the return of Hingham before the story was completed, and when the door opened the man of wealth found the officer lighting a pipe in an unconcerned way and the black bearded, mackinaw-shirted woodsman sitting where he had left him, his face still paralyzed with the same dumfounded look.

"You want too much," bellowed Hingham. "That red-headed little —— knows dogs all right and he has a topping place to raise them, but you needn't think you can bleed me just because I may or may not have a little money. What's become of all the wolfhounds that was on the list?"

"All dead but one, and she got loose and took to the woods when Paddy was sick."

"Dead then. No constitution. I know. Padraic was all the time trying to get me to put good money into them, but I knew. He's right that if they could be brought back there would be money in them, but it can't be done."

He settled himself ponderously on a chair by the table and figured with a pencil on the list. Then he declaimed:

"You're just twenty-five hundred too high. Not a word! I never argue. You can take it or leave it. That's me every time. Knock off twenty-five hundred, here and now, and I'll deal. Make me wait ten minutes and I wouldn't buy at any price; that's the way I deal every time. Action's the word. What say?"

Dave looked down at the slip in his hand. On it was scrawled in Paddy's writing:

> He'll offer you two thousand or twenty-five hundred less than our asking-price; that's why I made it what it is. Take him up.

The next day Dave and the officer pulled out for the settlement. Dave had a future suddenly free from the shadow of debt and a heart heavy with sorrow for the friend who had been compelled to strike out into the untracked wilderness.

The officer had letters ordering supplies, experienced dog men and equipment; all that wealth could do to put the pack in tip-top shape. He also bore an offer to increase the reward for the capture of Paddy to five thousand dollars and instructions to spare no effort.

THEN came Spring. The streams and muskegs became impassable for humans, and thronged with fish and animal-life which built huge the bones and sinews of Sheila's pup and trained the grizzled bitch, herself, till her leap had the breath-taking speed of a greyhound's and her bite the crushing power of a tiger's.

Together they ranged the whole Lake country, killed, ate, slept and grew. What few camps of insect-tortured fishermen they encountered they gave a wide berth. The signs of their killing were attributed to wolves and, although they had never been seen, legend grew up of a pair of over-sized wolves which were playing havoc with the game. When snow came again the blue dog was taller than his mother, clumsy still in puppy ways, but a killing-machine without an unsound fiber in his being.

At rest the same gentle, limpid gaze dreamed out from under jutting eyebrows as from his mother's eyes. In action, in silent pursuit of madly racing deer or in savage, unrelenting battle with wolf-pack for the kill, those eyes burned with a red fury which went with his martial appearance.

Snow brought knowledge of the pair to the settlements and to the kennel in the spruces. When Hingham came, on one of his frequent tours of inspection, he was told of the two wolfhounds who had killed the bull moose on Lac Carcajou, who had destroyed the pack of timber wolves the other side of the divide in a long battle which had covered twenty hours and ten miles of country.

"We'll take a look at them," announced the boss. "You are probably lying, but if that Sheila hound of Padraic's has survived and born a pup in the woods they would be worth owning."

Sleds were prepared, guides were summoned and for three weeks the hills were searched. Tracks in plenty were found, but the ultimate in dog-flesh could easily distance half-civilized dogs doomed to drag three hundred pounds of belly and self-importance.

In the end, Hingham perched in a roost on a hill-top with his binoculars while his guides scoured the country in an effort to drive the dogs into his view. He beheld a whitetail buck burst from the cover on the far bank of the stream in the valley below. He was running not with the high, bounding ease of ordinary flight but with the low, tail-down terror which showed that he knew that death was close behind.

Hardly had his blue coat appeared against the black curtain of the woods than Sheila and her pup leaped into view. Running side by side, giant frictionless strides eating up the ground with a perfection of grace which conveyed no suggestion of hurry, they lapped up the distance which divided them from their quarry. Then they divided.

Sheila drew alongside on the right, the pup on the left. A moment they ran thus as a team and then, faster than eye could follow, they struck. The terrified buck, pinned by the throat and flank, surged once, struggled a moment in the death throes and, before his muscles were stilled, was disemboweled and gleaming teeth were tearing at his juicy saddle.

The man on the hill-top thrilled with as nearly pure love of beauty as was in him. Never were such dogs! The powerful glasses brought the scene so close that he could see the sturdy flanks raising and lowering with the unhurried breath of rest. Here was a chance to make some money. He would capture these dogs and sell them to Skinner—no, Jones would give more.

Better still, breed from them. Buy the best wolfhounds and establish a strain of his own. Padraic's dreams, but with a difference. In Padraic's case that strain was the end. He looked on it with the sensation of the painter dreaming of the picture he should some day paint. Hingham saw each dog as the means leading to more gold.

Three weeks later the dogs were still at liberty. Hingham and his company returned to the open for fresh dogs to take the place of dead and slashed ones and fresh woodsmen whose nerves had not been tried by contest with voiceless, leaping beasts who feared man no more than dog and, no matter how hard pressed by yapping snarling pack, could always watch the man who circled the fray, noose in hand, and leap for his throat at the moment when it was poorest guarded.

Hingham was tired. He knew that money would serve him better than his too well-nourished thews.

"Two thousand five hundred apiece, boys, to the man that brings me those dogs unharmed."

The word spread and trappers and wolf-hunters gathered to the hunt from the whole north country. Five thousand for a couple of dogs looked easy, especially as every one knows that dogs are easy to catch.

The thing assumed the proportions of local news and appeared in print. In a little kennel in Duluth, the attendant, a small man, red haired and with hideously pock-marked face, read the item, gave notice to his employer, who vainly offered reckless raises in salary, and another man had joined the chase.

THREE stops before Fraser Creek Padraic swung himself to the ground, laced on his snow-shoes, and struck off into the woods along the surface of the frozen river. His pack had been pared to the sheerest necessities, what would have been starving and freezing rations to any but a woodsman. By going in from this point he had added fifty miles to his hike, but he had thus avoided the necessity of passing near the kennels of Hingham. At the thought of him the unlovely face contorted into a snarl that had something dog-like in it.

Four days later the slight figure slipping easily over the crusted river-surface began to find tracks—packs of dogs and regular runways of men. He turned and took to the timber, heading for the ridge surfaces. Even there he found tracks and only the exercise of extreme caution enabled him to avoid running into a man perched in a tree, sweeping the bottom with binoculars.

Padraic knew the fellow; they had been friendly, but he also knew that the reward that was out for him would make any man's friendship a doubtful affair and he was in no mood to be in the power of the vengeful Hingham. As they watched, the one the river-bottoms, the other the watcher, three shots rang out from a distant ridge. The watcher betrayed excitement. In the valley a pack of dogs, fighting dogs, Danes and Airdales, conducted by two men, hurried along the river bottom and entered the evergreens on either side of a narrowing where the river had cut a miniature cañon, less than two hundred yards across.

More silence. Then in the distance, in the direction of the gun-shots a hound's voice, a high, clear tenor, rose, wavered and died away in a chorus of canine song. Down-river swept the pack, hot scent of some animal in their nostrils, their hearts glad.

Then up-river appeared two figures, giant hounds, running easily but faster than any fox-hound. Mere dots at first, they appeared and reappeared, ever closer and finally the following pack, laboring in their slot. As the two were about to enter the narrows, one, the grizzled one, stopped. Her companion, the blue one, ran on a few leaps and returned to her side. Together they stared about them, keen nostrils raised, and then went on into the opening with something of a swagger in their lope.

Behind them appeared the pack—stout-hearted, brave beasts brought from trailing bear and cat in the western mountains. Before them, once they had entered the narrows, appeared the fighters—great Danes, three-quarters of their weight, terriers, smaller but with hearts that feared neither man nor beast, and in numbers. They were caught between two waves of dogs; and men, who had engineered it, were hurrying, following their dogs, lassos in hand ready to snare and bind the quarry when they had been overborne by weight of numbers.

Padraic breathed to himself, " 'Tain't fair! 'Tain't fair!" and his heart sank.

It did not seem as if escape were possible; and then his very being exulted at the bravery of these animals that he had aided nature to create.

The easy, carefree lope turned without hesitation to swift purposeful charge. From giant throats came roars of defiance, and the two threw themselves upon that half of the fighting pack approaching from the far bank. The leading dog, a Dane, met Sheila in full leap, was whirled squirming in a flurry of snow by her weight and speed and over him she passed, pausing for one slash that left him belly-torn and dying. That slight delay was enough to bring the blue dog to her side and together they met the pack.

Here was no bear that flees until brought to bay and then stands surrounded by the snarling ring till man arrives, no panther to take to tree or cañon-wall until driven out by man. Here were two leaping, bounding, destroying demons, bent on going through the pack, but not averse to killing as many as they could en route.

Above the ball of rolling, snapping beasts rose the fog of clawed-up snow. It moved slowly down-stream as a football scrimmage sometimes moves, leaving players strewed behind.

This was not play. Those figures were gallant dogs who would no longer play. Suddenly Sheila broke from the flurry on the down river side, leaped stiff-legged and again reentered. Another age-long moment and both dogs sprang clear, the blue dog snapping and pawing at a gallant Airedale that dragged from his throat. Another leap and the Airedale dropped, his grit had cost his life, and both dogs swept off down river, their gait no longer smooth.

Sheila moved with stiff, rocking stride, and the pup limped and bled. Behind them still roared the fight. In the heat feelings had been hurt, honor must be avenged, the impact of the other packs had been treated as the arrival of enemy and the lashing, swearing men had heavy, dangerous labor parting their servants.

Down the hill went Padraic, racing across the bend of the river to hit the track of the wounded dogs. His heart was full of pride in them, but he had begun to realize the size of the undertaking required to make them really his. A few miles down river the blood stopped.

"Good!" thought Padraic, " 't'was but a scratch."

A little below, the great twin tracks swung and entered a narrow feeder-stream. The snow here had had no wind and lay between precipitous banks, deep and soft. The dogs wallowed, their path a trough in the snow. Padraic drove himself till his breath came in creaks and his heart seemed to fill his chest, but the footing was bad for him, too.

Aside from speed his only care was to obliterate as much of the dog's trail as possible. Dogs would know that dogs had passed, but men would not, and the dogs of the pursuing packs were unhappy.

In spite of his effort darkness found him, still floundering, with no sight of the dogs. When he could see no more he slipped off his raquets, dug a hole in a drift, ate cold bacon and slept. Chill and moonlight wakened him later.

He slipped on his shoes and took up the trail with legs that would hardly flex, so stiff they were. Up, up, into the hills wound the creek-bed and up, up, went Padraic.

Twice the dogs had stopped to rest and started again at his approach, as their tracks told. Continually Padraic's cordy little body cried out for rest and never gained it. With the woods full of men and dogs, he knew that now was his only chance. He knew the dogs were tired, perhaps with days of chase, and the fight yesterday had taken its toll. He knew that he could not hold out forever, but the deep snow was taking a worse toll from the dogs than from him.

Over the hardwood ridge he raced. The tracks he followed grew longer wherever there was some crust, but when that failed the effort again to resume the struggle told on one of the dogs. Down the hill on the other side, down into the spruce they went, following another frozen creek-bed.

PADRAIC saw familiar things now. The dogs were going home. He knew where he was; ahead of him was a valley where he had trapped. In it was a cabin of his building, not twenty miles from the kennels. Many times, Sheila had followed him to that cabin along the trap line and back. His waning pace increased.

The forms, made by the body of one of the dogs as it rested, were frequent now. He expected to see them around any bend.

When the moment came it was in a form he had not expected. His eager eyes peering ahead missed a gray form which had come back and crouched in the edge of the woods. His first warning was that deep challenging roar, then he was whirled sidewise into the snow by the impact of a mighty body, and only the upflung arm saved his throat.

He lay a moment, expecting death. He had seen those punishing jaws at work. Then he realized, incredulously, that he was untouched save for that first spring.

He sat up and faced Sheila, forehead wrinkled, hackles raised, loins arched to spring, but held by some power beyond her comprehension. In the very act of destruction some memory of loved companionship had come to her.

"Ah, Sheila, acushla! Ye wouldn't injure your master. Come tell me you're sorry, Sheila, lass."

As his voice ran on, with endless endearments, his eyes followed pityingly her scarred and heaving frame and searched for and found the blue dog, unable to rise, not a hundred yards ahead.

"Come, Sheila, lick my hand, ye scalawag, and tell me ye're sorry."

The hackles were down now and the red battle light had left the eyes, but at the movement of his hand it rose again.

Only for a moment. Memory was doing its part. This was the man who never struck, who always loved. Into those wonderfully soft expressive eyes had come the love look and a moment later the great beast strode to his side and dropped her head into his outstretched palm.

Luckily the cabin was not far. Sheila, as soon as she had had an hour's rest, was herself again, but Padraic and the blue dog were in a hard way; especially the former, after he had cut poles, made a drag and with Sheila's help dragged the weak but untamed pup to the shelter.

TO HINGHAM came Johnny Goodfellow to report.

"Them dogs, they fighting sons of guns. They go right through that pack you send up and kill half of them, then they disappear. Jean and Pierre they say, 'spirits,' but you and I know better; we know, spirits come out of bottle. Eh, boss?"

"You bet! Here you are. Drink hearty."

"I know some one must have cover their tracks so I smell around and finally one of they hounds gets interested in a track that goes over into Little Two Otter Creek. It's racing racquet, long, thin. I follow it and fin' man living in Padraic's old cabin. I go around through brush and no tracks ain't gone out. I hide and watch cabin. Who you think living there and what you think he got?"

"Go on; spit it out."

"Padraic living there, what you think, heh? How about that five thousand dollar? You get sheriff and I take him in—ten-twelve hours. And what you think he got? Them dogs. That bitch tame as kitten, and that dog he snarl some and snap, but he let Padraic stroke him. You come along and we get all three."

That was how it was when Padraic opened the cabin-door a few days afterward, his duffle packed, his dogs sufficiently healed and tamed to travel, he heard a crack of a rifle and a bullet spat into the log beside him.

"Hands up!" ordered the voice.

Padraic's hands went up.

"Shut that door so the dogs won't get out."

Paddy closed it. A moment later he was handcuffed by that same officer who had first come to arrest him and was being taunted by Hingham.

"Mighty kind of you I call it, Paddy, to come back and catch these dogs for me. I been having trouble."

Paddy made no answer but sat and watched camp being made. Then he turned to the officer and said:

"This is twice you have pinched me now, Jeff. Twice they say is a coincidence; it won't be a habit till next time."

His ease irritated Hingham, who strode over to him and standing before him bellowed:

"There won't be any next time, —— you! See this?" He pointed to a scar on his forehead and another on his cheek. "And this? You gave me those, interfering between me and my property. I said then you would serve time and serve time you shall, and I have been looking into your past and found that that wasn't the first time you tried to kill a man because you didn't like the way he educated his dogs. I have enough against you now to keep you for fifteen years, and I am not done yet. You're a good dog man, I'll hand you that, but I'll show you that you can't interfere with Joe Hingham and get away with it."

The purple lines flamed out on his face and he seemed about to burst, as Padraic as calmly as before leaned sidewise so he could see past him and resumed his conversation.

"How did you leave all the folks, Jeff?"

He wasn't allowed to finish. Hingham's heavy hand slapped him upright, and the bull voice roared—

"You listen to me!"

Then, in his turn, Hingham was struck and whirled against the house as the officer warned him—

"Paddy is my prisoner. You touch him again, and I'll turn him loose and help him pick your ribs."

Muttering to himself Hingham strode off to the Indian camp. As soon as he had gone Jeff asked hurriedly:

"Didn't you hear from your partner what I told him about things out home? If you had come home and given yourself up it would have been pie to get you off, with Senator Jeffers on the job. It will be a bit harder now, but the senator said to tell you not to worry. You have public opinion with you and since the thing has to be a jury trial you needn't lose any sleep."

"That was kind of the senator and of you, too; but all that doesn't mean any more to me now than it did when Dave wrote me. It would be just as easy for me to dig up five thousand dollars as it would be to grow a new skin."

Then they saw Hingham coming back from the Indian's camp. With him were two men who carried ropes. They busied themselves at the windows of the cabin discussing means of taking the dogs.

Into their deliberations broke Paddy's voice—

"Don't you touch my dogs."

"They are mine. The bitch was on the list your partner sold me, and that makes her pup mine, too."

"Ye shouldn't have let her run for a year. She belongs to the man that caught her and that is me. Moreover, you offered to buy them of any man that could take them, for the same money ye offered to any man that could take me. You know dogs. I'll say that, or you wouldn't have valued them with your revenge."

That precipitated more talk. Padraic sat calmly and chatted with the officer or else flatly refused to let Hingham have the dogs on any terms.

Finally the man of wealth made the offer:

"All right. I'm not mosquito-minded. I want those dogs and have them I will. I got you where I want you and if it came to lawing I could put you up a tree in a minute, but no man can say that Joe Hingham isn't willing to pay for what he wants. I'll give you the five thousand for the dogs. How's that? Is that fair or ain't it?"

Jeff nudged Padraic in the ribs.

"There's your lawyer's fee," he whispered.

The blood flamed into Padraic's face. Only the man whose name is on the wanted list can appreciate the joy of facing a future free from pursuit. Then a look of resolution came into his eyes.

"Ye admit they's mine, and I can do what I want with them?"

"Yes."

"All right. Take off these cuffs."

When they were off he opened the door, strode within it and returned with his shot gun and two dogs, who crowded against him and snarled at the other men.

"Hi out, Sheila!" he ordered.

The great beast ran uncertainly forward, in answer to his wave, and the blue dog followed. Forty, fifty, sixty yards they ran, with uncertain backward glances, and then Padraic swept his gun to his shoulder and fired two charges of stinging bird shot at their tender hind quarters. They whirled, battle in their eyes, but faced a menacing Padraic with waving gun. A moment's hesitation and another charge apiece settled the question and they took to the woods, their hearts full of a great distrust of man and his ways.

"Well, you are a —— fool!" said Jeff.

"Oh, I don't know. They will probably give me ten years, and you can't tell—some stinker like Pot Gut here might get ahold of them. I'd rather trust them in the open. They have a chance there."

THE POET-SCOUT'S ONLY DEFEAT

by Raymond W. Thorp

THE FIRST building erected in the Black Hills, D.T.,—barring the seven log cabins within the walls of the stockade—was constructed by Dr. D. N. Flick. The building was a substantial hewn-log structure, designed as a home for his family whenever the way was made clear for them to come in. When this pioneer building neared completion the doctor consented to leave the hills with the exodus of miners, in obedience to the order of General Crook in August of that year, 1875.

Dr. Flick, having not quite completed the building before he left the hills, Capt. Pollock put the finishing touches on it, and occupied it as military headquarters during the remainder of his stay in the Hills. After the withdrawal of the military forces, Captain Jack Crawford, the poet-scout, occupied the building undisturbed until one bright morning in the middle of April, 1876, when the doctor drove up to the door of his residence with his family and household goods, to find it appropriated by somebody who was absent at the time—the doctor didn't know, and didn't care a continental, who. In nowise daunted by the unfavorable aspect of the situation, he unloaded his goods, took possession of his house, and awaited developments. Mrs. Flick meanwhile prepared dinner.

Just as the family was seated at the table enjoying their noonday meal, Capt. Jack, with his friend, Attorney T. Harvey, appeared and entered unbidden.

Capt. Jack immediately demanded an explanation from the doctor, as well as an unconditional surrender of the premises, asking sternly:

"Sir, by what right, and whose authority, are you here?"

The doctor replied defiantly:

"By right of ownership, and by my own authority, sir, I need none other."

The poet-scout ordered the doctor to "vamoose the ranch" instanter and take all his belongings with him, or take the consequences.

Whereupon the doctor, fully cognizant of his own rights in the matter, quickly took up his Sharp's rifle, and, leveling it at Crawford, told him to go, and go quickly. Capt. Jack wisely withdrew, to appear again in another attitude.

The conflicting claims resulted in the second suit in equity in the Black Hills. Attorney Tom Harvey, in behalf of his client, Capt. Jack, at once brought action against Flick for forcible entry.

Attorney Harvey brought out the fact during the prosecution that every foot of ground and stick of timber in the hills, belonged by virtue of solemn treaty to the Indians, and no title whatsoever could be vested in the defendant. This was a poser, but not quite enough to subdue the doctor.

The doctor, taking the stand, remarked, with cutting sarcasm, that he was aware of the impossibility of securing valid title to property in the Hills, but that he claimed a title far and above all civil law—an equitable claim, under which any man had the divine right to reap the fruits of his own honest labor.

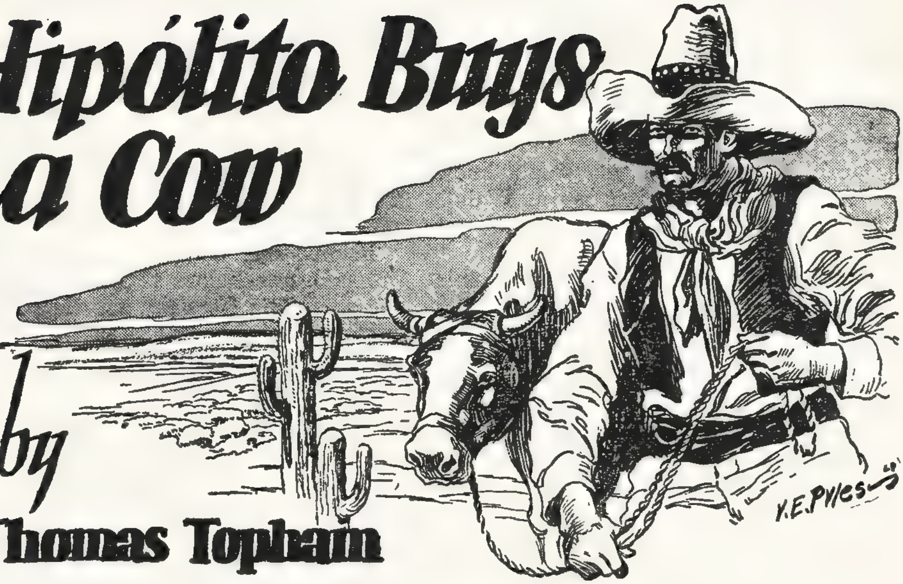
With eloquence he told the jury, in resonant tones and with beautifully rounded periods, of how he had procured the timber for the building from the virgin forest which adorned the hillsides nearby; had them hauled to the ground selected as a home for his family, where they were hewn, fashioned and fitted in their respective places in the structure—all of which was paid for, in part by the sweat of his own brow, but mostly in good "coin of the realm," the lawful money of Uncle Sam.

He told also, of how when the fabric was almost on the verge of completion, he went out of the Hills, like a true patriot—under military escort, with the full determination of returning at the first favorable opportunity. In closing his remarks, he told the jury of five burly miners that he proposed to defend what he regarded as his rights at all times, and would allow no longhaired, buckskin-clad scout—poet though he be—or any other man, to defraud him thereof.

Needless to say, the jury of five honest miners, ever on the side of justice and right, rendered a verdict in favor of the defendant Flick, and for the first and only time in his eventful life, Capt. Jack Crawford made a bad second.

Hipólito Buys a Cow

by Thomas Topham



Author of "Frijoles for Breakfast," "The Bumping-Off of 'Brute' Kenton," etc.

AH YES, *amigo*, you behold before you a man who is desolate in mind, crushed in spirit, wrecked in body, a man for whom life holds nothing in store. It is sad, *señor*, that a man can descend to such depths, ah yes! You spurn me, *señor*, as you should, but ah! I was not always thus as you see me today, ragged, dirty, forlorn, kicked and cuffed by the humblest peon in Lower California.

I weep at my humiliation, *amigo*, that I, Hipólito Garcia, once a brave soldier, a gay *caballero*, a dashing devil of a fellow, who alone, routed an entire army, should have descended so far as to accept *cigarros* from any chance lounger in the plaza.

Oh *señor*, a thousand thanks! Two, did you say? Again a thousand thanks! They are of my favorite brand that I smoked when at the height of my prosperity.

Sí, *señor*, I was once a soldier, personal aide to the noble patriot, General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza. We dashed hither and thither, we fought, we loved, we raided and we drank, until time and the vicissitudes of war dispersed this gay troop.

The general was a mighty man in Baja California, but alas, he has married an heiress and has settled down upon a rich *hacienda*. But for that he might even now be sitting in a palace at Mexico City, for until he obtained an amnesty he was a dangerous revolutionist, one whom the government feared. I tell you truly, the government was happy to grant him amnesty and get him out of the field.

Many a fierce battle did I fight through at his side, the side of my brave general; we campaigned long together, and when at last he sheathed his sword and became a rancher, I too, took up the ways of peace and settled myself on a small *rancho* close to my general.

We were very happy, *señor*, oh, very happy, the general on his great *hacienda*, myself with my faithful wife and *niños* on the little *rancho*. But ah, I, like many another, fell victim to a woman's whim.

Pardon my tears, *amigo*. You behold me quite unnerved. I am weak and trembling as I think of my downfall. You ask how a woman's whim could divest me of my home, my wife, my beautiful *niños?* I implore you, *señor*, to believe me when I tell you that it came about through my wife's fanciful and atrocious desire for a cow.

You laugh in derision! Ah, *señor*, you should not. Little you know of a woman's mind when she sets it on an object, especially if the object be a cow. May a plague blast all cows in Mexico; may the grass fail that nourishes them; may the springs dry up where they drink; ah, could I

"Hipólito Buys a Cow," copyright, 1924, by Thomas Topham.

kill all the cows in the world by one blow, *señor*, I swear that one blow would of a certainty be delivered in the twinkling of an eye.

Accept the expression of my profound gratitude, *señor*. A *cigarro* now and then is a solace. You say that you would know how this whim could blast me as it did? It is but a simple story, *amigo*, and yet fraught with tragedy.

It started, *señor*, with a goat as the simple beginning. We possessed a very beautiful goat at our modest little *rancho* whose keep was as nothing. Many a long day have I admired this animal and her consuming appetite. She would devour anything, and so, as I say, her keep amounted to a trifle.

I was driving up this useful animal one morning for my wife to milk, when my wife flew into a great and sudden rage. She spurned the goat.

"A man should provide his family with a cow," she cried in her rage. "All of our neighbors have beautiful cows. Shame on you that you should not have a cow."

Señor, I said absolutely nothing in reply. It is not well to irritate women. But she would not stop. She recalled a thoughtless adventure of mine. Upon an occasion many weeks before I had gone of my own free will to purchase a cow, the pesos jingling in my pocket. I had met old *compadres* of the camp, and we had tarried at an Ensenada *cantina* to drink only to our health and prosperity. So, on that occasion I came home without the cow. You, a man, will understand; no woman could.

I was maddened by my wife's so shameless reference to that occasion. It was money I had earned, and who, I ask you, has a better right to spend such money than the one who has labored for it?

"Woman," I said to her with a sternness, "your insults go harmlessly above my head. But keep your sharp tongue silent, vixen, or I shall jerk it out of your mouth with a suddenness."

I assure you, *señor*, I spoke like a man should.

But my wife was a woman of a temper. Horrible as it may seem to you, *señor*, she picked up a stick of wood and hurled it at my head. In her anger she would have brained me, her husband, the father of three helpless children, would have left them without a protector. I can not contemplate it without a shudder.

I was not to be caught asleep. My soldierly training stood me well. I dodged the piece of wood, and self-preservation being a law, I reached for the ax with which to defend myself from the infuriated woman. I was not of a sufficient alertness, however, and as I straightened my body, another stick of wood caught me beneath the chin.

Believe me, *amigo*, I bit the dust. I dropped unconscious at the feet of my wife, the ax falling from my nerveless hand and cutting a horrible gash in my foot. See for yourself, *señor;* do not take my poor word for it. Is it not a gash of a very great terribleness? I shall carry the scar to my grave.

I struggled back to life lying upon my pallet in the house, whither my faithful wife had carried me. She had become alarmed at my condition and had bound up my chin and my foot.

I groaned in agony.

My wife picked up a large knife which we used for the cutting of meat and pretended to be employed at the table.

I groaned again, the pain in my foot being most excruciating.

"Beloved," said my wife in her soft voice, "I am still of the belief that we should have a cow. The *niños* need the milk of a cow. It is, perhaps, that you have no pride that you refuse to provide your family with a cow."

Think of it, *señor*, her mind was still tenaciously clinging to this miserable cow, while I, her mate, lay there on a bed of pain, perhaps dying.

Wounded as I was and helpless, I yet spoke like a man.

"Murderess," I shouted, "plunge your knife into me and finish the work you have started. Ah-ha! You dare not! Yet you shall have this cow that you demand when I but get the money. I shall work like a slave and save the money for this cow, even though I have no rifle with which to defend my home."

Such, *señor*, was my intention. I had decided that if a cow would add to the happiness of my wife she should have it. I was willing to make great sacrifices, to sink my own feelings, yes, I felt that to maintain the peace that is necessary to a happy home, I would even milk this cow.

My wife was much mollified by my unalterable decision that we should have this cow.

"We shall not wait, my own Hipólito," she cried, for she could be exceedingly affectionate upon occasions. "My Hipólito, I have scraped together the sum of eighty pesos. With this you shall go to the Hacienda de Sanchez, where they have many cows of an excellency, and you shall buy us a noble animal which shall feed our *niños* and make them strong and brave."

"I shall obtain this cow for you," I promised, for such, *señor*, was my intention. "It shall be a wonderful cow."

"If you squander the money as you did before it shall not go easy with you," she threatened me.

"Desist, woman," I ordered her sternly. "I shall return with the animal you so much desire."

But in spite of this promise of mine, and I assure you, *señor*, I had no other thought in mind, this vixen of a wife continued to threaten me.

"You shall return with a cow," she said with a fierceness, "or the ax with which you hoped to dash out my brains will dash out your own."

Such were her words, *amigo*. I sigh, *señor*, at the thought of such terrible words from the wife of my bosom. Truly, I had no other intention but to defend myself, my very life, when I so hastily grasped the ax.

My wife obtained the money which she had hidden in a can and buried behind the house. I examined the money, having upon occasion had a peso here, another there, disappear mysteriously. As I say, I examined these coins which my wife produced and I swear, *señor*, that a number of them had the imprint of my teeth upon them where I had tested them when I came into their possession.

I weep, *señor*, at such treachery, but I said nothing to my wife, feeling always, *señor*, that it is best to refrain from quarrels. But my soul seethed at myself for being a simpleton. I can truly say that at least forty of these coins bore the marks of my teeth. They represented many hours of honest toil and now they would be squandered for a cow.

I departed moodily, for my chin and my foot hurt fiercely; my horse was not of the best and my thoughts were upon the days when I was an unmarried man. Then, I assure you, I should not have been on my way to purchase a cow had I eighty pesos in my pocket.

I directed the steps of my faithful steed toward the Hacienda de Sanchez, a famous place where an Americano manager kept a large assortment of cattle, especially cows for the milking.

Surely, I thought, eighty pesos was an immense, an unheard of sum to pay for a cow. Of a certainty it was criminal to pay that much for an animal when my sombrero was in such poor condition. I had, *señor*, you must understand, been a dandy in my younger days. My sombrero then, I assure you, jingled with its trimmings and bore heavy on the head. Five pesos, at the most ten, would purchase me a very respectable sombrero which I could wear without shame—and still I would have seventy, perhaps seventy-five pesos with which to purchase a cow, surely a sufficiency.

Gracias, señor. You are very gracious with your *cigarros*. I am happy, *amigo*, that you are pleased to pay me the compliment to agree with me that it was but natural a man of my caliber should think of his appearance.

It was with the one innocent thought in mind of purchasing a decent sombrero, that where the road turned toward Ensenada, I turned. I arrived at eventide. It was with a feeling of deep regret that I observed the store which dispensed my favorite style of sombrero was closed.

I prepared to return, to go direct to the Hacienda de Sanchez and buy a cow, but *señor*, it was only natural that I should be hot and my throat as dry as the Baja California hills after my long ride. I craved a deep drink of cool *clarete* with the ice tinkling in the glass.

Ah, *señor*, I should draw the veil. Two of my old companions in arms were present and I am weak when I meet old friends. It was a merry party, *señor*, with the glasses clinking and the money jingling on the bar, and later a try at monte.

Monte is a most deceiving game, my friend. I lost what remained of the eighty pesos. In horror at what I had done, with the picture before my eyes of my faithful wife awaiting her cow, and in hopes of recouping my fearful losses, I also staked my horse, my saddle, my shirt and my new shoes, that I had donned for the occasion of my journey. No, *señor*, the robbers would offer me nothing for my sombrero, for which I hold no ill-feeling as it was not a sombrero to attract one's fancy, but I am bitter that they refused to lend me a peso on my trousers.

With one more peso, *señor*, *quien sabe*? I might even, with the one peso, have won back my property and enough money to have purchased a whole herd of miserable cows, an entire *hacienda*. Ah, *señor*, one never knows what the turn of a card will do.

Of such bitterness, *señor*, are my memories! Do you wonder that the tears stream from my eyes? Your sympathy, *amigo*, is charming, your *cigarros* excellent.

Ah, *señor*, I left this beautiful little city of Ensenada, which I had entered in such high hopes, on foot, without a centavo. It was dark. I walked up the road, my thoughts now straying back to the cow and the ax. Of a certainty my faithful wife would use the ax upon me. I could see my lifeless body sprawled on the ground, an ignoble end, *señor*, for one who has fought man to man in bloody battles. I wept, I wailed in my agony, I ground my teeth in rage.

No, my wife should not be bereft of her cow! I, Hipólito Garcia, was of a courageousness sufficient to obtain this cow. I would borrow one from the Hacienda de Sanchez, which had many cows and would not miss one for a few days. I would take this cow to my faithful wife, then I would quietly remove it upon a dark night and restore it to the owners. She would think it stolen and would rage, but not at me. Surely, *señor*, an innocent little ruse which would save my very life and please my wife, sitting patiently at home awaiting the pleasure of milking this cow.

Certainly, *señor*, I had no intention of stealing a cow. I was driven in my extemity to borrowing, but the intention, not the act, *señor*, is by what one should be judged.

THE Hacienda de Sanchez is a large *rancho*. There were many cows especially for the milking gathered in a corral. It was very dark. I found an old rope and with this as a halter I cautiously escorted a cow out, past another corral where a few horses were kept for use about the *rancho*.

What more natural, *señor*, than that I, who am a poor walker and had a cruelly wounded foot where the ax had cut it, should impose upon the kindness of the Hacienda de Sanchez to the extent of also borrowing a horse? But the manager of the *hacienda*, being a suspicious *Americano*, had locked up his saddles and bridles.

However, being blessed with an ingenuity, I devised a bridle from a section of the rope, and directed my steps away and toward my home. I did not know that a troop of Federal soldiers was encamped upon the *hacienda*, being even then engaged in attempting to run down some miserable cattle-thieves who had been causing much trouble.

I could not go at a fast gait, the cow being very slow of foot and upon occasion stubborn, desiring not to go at all, so it was that daylight found me not many miles away from the *hacienda* and still a long way from my home, where my faithful wife was waiting to receive this cow.

"The *niños* will not get much milk of the cow this morning," I thought with regret, but still, *señor*, I was cheerful as I thought of having the cow, when but for devising my little ruse I should have been plodding homeward cowless completely.

It was shortly after the break of day that I observed with alarm that I was being pursued. I had little time to devise my escape. The troop of Federal soldiers which had been at the *hacienda* had mistaken me for a cattle-thief and had given chase.

I was compelled to abandon my precious cow. It was fortunate that I had selected an excellent horse at the *hacienda*. He stood me in good stead, and I dashed away. The cow furnished diversion for my pursuers. They stopped to examine her and to congratulate themselves upon her recovery.

As I say, I dashed ahead. Turning about at a point of vantage, I observed with surprize that the troop had not turned back but was progressing ahead on the road, leading the cow. This maneuver irritated and astonished me. The soldiers did not mean to be contented with the cow, but were determined to progress, and I surmised, conduct a search for me, who had borrowed the animal.

I kept well ahead of them, as they moved slowly because of the cow. I stopped from time to time to observe their tactics. After a few hours they halted and prepared to make camp to rest. They still had the cow.

I was now free to dash home, but, *señor*, the terrible thought came to me that I was still without a cow. I gnashed my teeth in rage. Had I but possessed a gun I should have attacked my pursuers in the desperate effort to recover this cow or die the death of a hero.

My rage mounted high. Of a certainty, *señor*, it was sufficient to make a man of my caliber rage. I shook my fist at the camp of the *soldados*.

"Were General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza but in the field you should pay for this," I hurled at the invaders, thinking of the old days.

The utterance of this magic name struck fire in my brain. The general was always ready to succor the weak. He is a noble man, a patriot. Impetuous, yes, but believe me, *señor*, one who is also clever and remembers his friends. Many a time I have heard him boast that he would fight —— himself for a friend.

In my great anger I struck my horse and dashed off toward the *hacienda* of General Urquiza. He was there, smoking *cigarros* in the shade. I poured my story into his ears.

I had not the time to inform the general of all the details of my adventure. I must be brief, for time pressed.

"General," I cried, "last night I went to purchase a cow, a noble animal, with money saved by my wife at much sacrifice. Today as I was leading the animal home, a troop of soldiers dashed upon me, rudely took this animal from me, and it was only by the fleetness of my horse that I escaped. General, behold! I cannot go back to my wife without this cow! The troop is encamped close by."

The general had fought Federal soldiers many years. Only recently had he obtained amnesty and settled down to the ways of peace. My story struck alive the smoldering embers in his heart. With a bound he entered the house and came forth strapping on the sword I knew so well when I was his faithful aide. Ah yes, I have wiped blood from this same sword many, many times.

"My Hipólito," he cried, "we shall recover this cow, restore the animal to you."

He cursed with a fierceness, called to some of his men. Many of those who had served under him in the field were now laboring on the *hacienda*. With a quickness past belief he told them my story.

"We shall strike a blow for liberty," he shouted to them. "Who will join in this enterprise? We shall recover for Hipólito his cow; who knows, we may sweep on into Ensenada, raise the country, show the oppressors that the rights of even the humblest must be preserved, that the constitution must be protected, our Fatherland maintained. One more blow for liberty, my brave men!"

Señor, I weep as I think of his oration. He is a noble speaker, one who speaks from the heart. Many of the men were moved. They crowded about him. When several hung back in offering their services the cowards were justly treated to kicks and curses until they embarked upon the enterprise.

General Urquiza opened a storehouse and revealed many rifles and much ammunition.

"It is thus, my dear Hipólito, that I prepared for an emergency," he explained to me. "When I took to the paths of peace I began quietly gathering this store, realizing that the day would come when it might be needed. The hour has struck."

I agree with you *señor*, he was a thoughtful man. Even as he was peacefully operating this *hacienda* he was thinking ahead, to the time when it might be necessary to strike a blow for liberty.

It seemed but a moment that we were preparing for the expedition. The excitement was high. I swung into my old work as aide to the general as if it had been but yesterday. I flew hither and thither, carrying the general's orders. Here I straightened out a quarrel over a saddle, there I showed a man how his rifle should be operated, another I directed the proper way to carry his rifle on his saddle to be ready for use. It was very pleasing, *señor*, to get back to the activity of the field.

WE GALLOPED forth, a brave column of twenty-four men, the general in advance. I observed that he wobbled a little in his saddle, being soft from his inactivity, but he sternly held himself in the lead. It was always so. Always he led his troops upon the march.

Señor, it was indeed exciting when we came in contact with the enemy. There was a great shooting. Bullets flew thick and fast above us, and ours showered upon the foe. We dismounted, sent the horses to the rear, placed ourselves in advantageous positions behind hummocks, brush, wherever we could find shelter, and our enemies did the same.

I borrowed the field-glasses of my general.

I observed the enemy. They still had the cow.

We fought fiercely, almost the entire day, shooting back and forth. The enemy was stubborn. He would not retire. The day wore on with the battle still progressing. Fortunately the enemy was shooting high and our casualties were light. No one was hit, except that a package of *cigarros* was shot from the hand of Pedro Salinas. He cursed with a fierceness, *señor*. It was his last package and his plight was terrible. He was busy all the day dodging from place to place, begging and borrowing *cigarros*. I pitied the poor —— and once flung him almost an entire package that I had removed from the general's saddle-bags.

I can tell you, *señor*, it was exciting. We were busily shooting when the general tapped me on the shoulder. He called me back from the line of battle and pointed out a miserable specimen of humanity.

"A deserter from the enemy," said the general. "He shall be shot."

I pacified the general.

"We shall interview this deserter," I said. "He may tell us much of value."

"See that he tells the truth," the general hissed, for he had had much experience with deserters.

The fellow's story rang true. He had been impressed into the enemy's army, he told us, much against his will. It is so they fight, *señor*, taking men from their *ranchos* and making them *soldados*. He had deserted because he was angry. He was willing to talk.

"They are doing what the Americanos call bluffing," this deserter said. "One good charge would send them flying. You have noticed that they shoot at intervals only? It is to conserve their ammunition. I have discovered their secret, *señor el general*. They have a very little of good ammunition. One good round and they are through. The rest are blank cartridges, a noise only, furnished them to frighten mobs but not for use in battle. They are trembling even now that you will charge them and they will have only blank cartridges to fire."

General Urquiza became excited to a degree.

"A ruse," he cried, "will wipe out their ammunition—then we shall charge against their blank cartridges, rout them, butcher them."

He drew our army together.

"Each man shall place his sombrero on his rifle and raise it high above the brush," he directed. "Then when the enemy has expended his ammunition we shall charge. It is a ruse of much cleverness that I have used before. It shall win us the battle."

We crouched low, raised our sombreros. A terrible, devastating fire swept over us. Ah, *amigo*, little you know of battle until you have heard the wicked bullets intended for your heart sweep over you.

But the fire died down. We withdrew our sombreros, none of them harmed, because of the miserable aim of the enemy.

"We shall charge," declared General Urquiza.

He pressed his famous sword into my hand.

"Hipólito, my brave one," he told me, "you shall lead this charge. I shall relinquish the honor to you. The enemy is powerless. His ammunition is gone. You shall have the honor of sweeping on to victory, rescuing your cow. Onward, my brave Hipólito, lead this charge into the enemy's teeth!"

Señor, what could I do? It was a very great honor, and if the deserter told the truth, virtually without danger. I hesitated. I did not desire to deprive my generous general of the honor of leading this charge.

"Ah, my general," I cried, "your sacrifice touches me deeply but I can not accept it. No, my general, I could not think of usurping your place at the head of the army."

"Is it that you are afraid?" asked General Urquiza.

His tone of scorn aroused me to a fury. It was not safe in those days, *señor*, for a man to ask me such questions. Still I hesitated. The enemy might have a few more excellent cartridges; the deserter might even be lying entirely. This story of blank cartridges might be a ruse.

"Coward!" hissed the general in my ear. "It is your cow."

"It is enough," I shouted, my fury mounting higher at the mention of the hateful cow.

Rudely grasping the general's sword I leaped upon my horse. I swung the sword around my head, I gnashed my teeth, I cursed.

"Forward, my brave *compadres!*" I cried loudly. "Forward to victory or death!"

Beating my bare heels into the ribs of my steed I dashed directly toward the enemy.

Of the next few minutes I remember little *señor*. I lived fast. Events tumbled one after another. There was a very great noise as of shooting.

"Ah-ha," I thought as I dashed bravely on, "noise, noise only." But a whistle above my head, a quick, sharp *zing* close to my ear, led me to decide, suddenly, that the miserable deserter who had talked so glibly of blank cartridges was a liar of the first magnitude. Another *zing*. *Señor*, I admit that I was frightened. I am only human and life then was sweet.

As my horse dashed on I looked around over my shoulder to see how my *compadres* were taking this *zip-zing* of the wicked bullets, to cheer them on if they were faltering.

Señor, as I hope for salvation on the great day, I was charging alone against an army!

My cowardly companions had failed to heed my ringing challenge to their manhood. They were cringing on the old battle-line in safety.

My brain is never more active, more resourceful, than when I am in deadly danger. My thoughts raced. Should I turn back? Surely one stood no chance in charging alone against an entire army. The column against which I was moving would annihilate me if I continued my lonesome charge. If I retreated I stood the terrible chance of being shot in the back. Posterity never forgives men shot in the back, *amigo*. I thought of my *niños*. They could not live down such shame.

Fate settled the question for me, *señor*, as fate has a habit of settling all questions. A bullet from the enemy tore through my left arm. See the scar, *señor?* Time has healed it, dwindled it to a bare mark, but it was, once, a terrible scar. And my goodness, how the wound did pain. Like a hot iron, *señor*, thrust into the living flesh. They lie who tell you a bullet does not hurt. Who should know better than I?

Thank you, *señor*. Your generosity with your *cigarros* removes the searing memory of that painful bullet.

But, *señor*, fate continued her cruel ministrations. Another bullet laid my horse lifeless. The noble animal sank down dead. Injured as I was by the fall and my terrible wound, I scrambled to my feet. Bullets continued to *zip* and *zing* painfully close.

I had no alternative but to surrender! I was now close to the enemy. Any moment a lucky shot might end my life. They were shooting furiously. I attempted to raise my arms in token of abject surrender, for all was lost. My cruelly wounded left arm would not rise. My right, still clinging to the general's sword, went up. I started on a run for the enemy's position, now only a few yards distant, to surrender my sword, held aloft.

The cowards! They mistook my intention, and believing that I was still charging, now on foot, they fired a withering volley and ran.

Of a certainty I was surprized, *señor*. When I perceived that they did not intend to accept my surrender but were running away, my rage at their cowardice knew no bounds. I stormed, I cursed. I struck wildly with my sword. I cut down one poor fellow by a slash across his legs. He dropped, howling. I stabbed another in the back, but fortunately for him the sword was not sharp, not having been given the proper care since I had retired as the general's aide. Others were fleeing, a few on horses but most of them on foot, being bewildered by my fierce charge.

Ah, *señor*, it was a heartening sight. I picked up an abandoned rifle and fired a volley wildly, then turned around and faced the cow, tied to a bush and calmly chewing her cud.

Ah, *señor*, but I was happy to meet this cow again, I embraced her fervently.

My *compadres*, led by the intrepid General Juan Manuel Lopez Urquiza, had seen the enormous success of my charge. They came galloping up.

"*Viva! Viva! Viva!*" the shouts rang out. "*Viva* Hipólito!"

Ah, my friend, it would have done your heart good to have been there. My general leaped from his horse. He kissed me on the cheek, he tenderly patted my poor, torn arm, he made an oration. Modesty forbids me, *señor*, repeating his words, but they are burned as if with fire in my memory.

He bade his man look upon the bravest man he had ever beheld in his distinguished career as a soldier. He called attention that I, alone, had charged upon and defeated an entire army, putting it to utter rout. And he returned back to me my cow. Yes, *señor*, out of his generosity he gave me this entire cow, although he and his men had fought for it at much danger.

There was much loot, my friend. Twenty horses and saddles, two wagon-loads of supplies which had been following the column and had caught up to it while the battle was raging, sombreros scattered on the ground. The loot was divided among the men. I was content with my cow and a very handsome sombrero. Yes, *señor*, I would have desired a horse, but there were not enough to go around.

There was talk of sweeping on into Ensenada, storming the town and then marching on Mexico City, but I opposed this. I pointed out that the object of the glorious revolution had been attained—my cow was restored to me and it was imperative that I take this cow to my long-suffering wife. This discouraged the general. He had no stomach for campaigning without Hipólito, his aide in many campaigns.

"We shall retire," declared the general, "go back to our peaceful way of life. This will be a lesson to the government that we are not to be trifled with. This glorious victory will go down in the annals of our Fatherland."

The two prisoners whom I had wounded in my fierce rage were allowed to depart on foot. They were told sternly that but for the fact they had fallen to a generous and civilized foe they would have been shot. They richly deserved such a fate, *señor*. A number of us took from them a few things as souvenirs of the battle, merely, and with well-directed kicks they were sent howling down the road. We could not find the deserter or it would have gone hard with him, I can assure you. He had planned to murder a whole army in cold blood.

It was then, *señor*, after the proper thanks to my brave *compadres*, that I led forth the cow and started for my home. My arm had been bound up. I had lost much skin from my face when my horse had been shot from under me and I had fallen in a heap, and my foot, gashed by the ax, was still painful.

I found that my foot was too painful to walk, so as the night progressed I was constrained to mount the cow. It was not pleasing riding for a dashing fellow like me, but, *señor*, what can a man do when he has no other animal to ride? I rode all night, *señor*, in this fashion, the cow being very, very slow. I dozed as the animal walked slowly along, and once the foolish beast strayed from the road and laid down. So we both slept there until the dawn came, when we resumed our painful walk.

As we approached my humble home my spirits rose high. I sang, I warbled. I had gone through much, I had aroused the country to a menacing revolution, I had waded through seas of blood, had fought and conquered, all for the sake of a woman's whim.

True, I was grievously wounded, I was without a horse, saddle, shirt or shoes, but *señor*, I was a hero. I had proved worthy of the love and confidence of a woman. A woman had sent me forth upon a mission to bring home a cow and I was bringing it. Such were the thoughts that ran through my mind, *amigo*, as I approached my home.

What was my surprize, *señor*, when I saw my wife dash from the house, bearing the fatal ax. I sat on the cow like one petrified.

"What are you doing with that miserable cow?" my wife shrieked at me, her faithful Hipólito, who had risked so much for her merest whim.

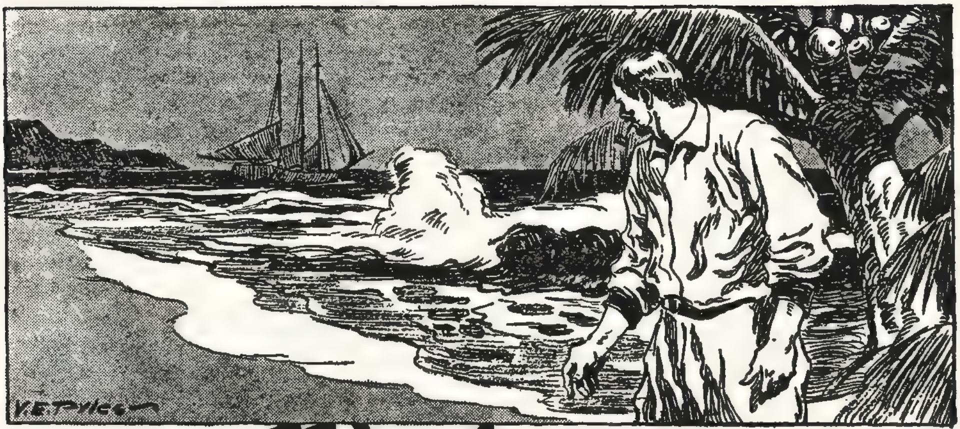
I did not answer. I could not. Such a question, *señor!* What was I doing with the cow? I was riding it home, *señor*, of a truth, as she bid me do.

"I have changed my mind," screamed my wife at me in anger. "I forgot that I must purchase many things for the *Fiesta de la Rosa*. You had barely left when I sent little Manuel to the Hacienda de Sanchez to inform you that I had changed my mind, to stop you from squandering my money for a cow. He waited long, but you did not arrive. You will take this cow back where you purchased it, where I know not, and return with my money, my eighty fine pesos, deceiver."

She brandished the ax most menacingly, close to my sound foot.

Life is sad *amigo*, when a woman changes her mind. I could not explain this cow, nor how I could not return it. I escaped with my life, which was something, but I lost the fine sombrero, my only spoils of war.

Gracias, señor! You are a thousand times too kind. This five peso note will do much to assuage my grief, to wipe away my tears. Shall we not indulge, *amigo*, in a glass of *clarete*, and drink to the confounding of all cows—and women?



Water

by Herman Petersen

Author of "Five Fathoms Down," "Cheating Fate," etc.

BARNEY HARE downed his jolt of trade gin neat. With a freckled hand he pushed the water-bottle disdainfully from him.

"Water!" he exclaimed with a grimace of disgust, and he coughed to clear the sting of the gin from his husky throat. "Water is f'r th' ladies t' wash thimsel's in!"

Parker Reid, tall and blond, blue-eyed and languid, removed the drooping cigaret from his smiling lips and laughed easily.

"You know, Wells," he drawled in a sleepy voice, "Barney isn't meaning that he isn't a lady or that he doesn't wet his hide with sweet water occasionally. It rains in these islands at times, you know. He means he's afraid of corroding his throat."

Wells took the monocle from his right eye and polished it on a limp handkerchief. He smiled suavely.

"I'm inclined to agree with him," he admitted. "I've a copper throat myself. But this trade gin—my word! It's rather raw!"

The place was Tahiti—Papeete. The time—a drowsing tropic afternoon. The three men, on the balcony of the Cercle Bougainville, were seated about a table all ring-marked and spotted with the old chars of innumerable carelessly placed cigar and cigaret butts.

On the table, gleaming white against the stained and marred wood top, was spread a sheet of ordinary unruled, white writing-paper. On the paper lay two pearls. They were large pearls, both of them; a match as to size. Placed on an American five-cent piece either would have fully equaled the diameter of the coin. Their shape was round, perfectly so.

Wells, the pearl buyer, carefully replaced the monocle in his eye and leaned over the table. With a gentle finger he moved the pearls. After a moment given to a close study of the two lustrous spheres, he straightened up in his chair and lifted his liquor glass to sip of its contents—mixed gin and water.

"Gentlemen," he said slowly, placing the glass carefully down, back on to the wet ring it had made on the table, "I've purchased pearls and pearls. I've seen thousands more, thousands I didn't buy. But I don't believe I've ever seen two pearls so unusual and yet so well matched as these of yours. In size, shape and color—they are identical."

Parker Reid smiled sleepily. Barney Hare poured himself another slug of gin. Wells courteously offered the water-bottle. Barney waved it away and swallowed the gin at a gulp.

"Th' ——!" he exclaimed when, after the passing of the gin, his convulsed throat again responded to his efforts at speech.

"Th' —— ye say! 'Tis wit' some crown jewels they should be then!"

Wells' heavy-jawed face was momentarily touched with a slight smile.

"They are rare enough for that, or queer enough, whichever you will." Wells' face sobered. "But I'm very much afraid that that idea is out of the question."

Barney fished a stubby pipe from a trouser pocket and stuck it in a corner of his mouth.

"Out of th' question, is it? Well, if th' kings won't have 'em t' —— wit' 'em!" he declared. "Ye can fin' a Rooshian gran' duke or a Pittsburgh millionaire. It's all th' same wit' us."

Wells shook his head a little.

"That won't do either. To tell the truth, gentlemen, your pearls are so odd—really, I doubt you can dispose of them at any great price."

Parker Reid's face still wore its sleepy smile. He hung the drooping cigaret back between his lips.

"Too much—er—color?" he asked.

Wells picked up his glass of gin and water and swirled its contents about. He took a swallow or two.

"Exactly!" he replied. "Or, rather, let us say, too peculiar a color."

For a while Barney Hare chewed on the stem of his pipe. Then he took up one of the pearls and held it between a heavy, freckled finger and a thumb.

"By golly now! When ye stop t' think of it—they are queer at that!" he muttered, turning the pearl in his fingers. "They have th' look of bein' splashed wit' blood."

The two pearls were, as Wells had branded them, peculiar. Of a lustrous flesh-pink undertone, the sea-gems were spotted thickly with dark-red. The spots varied in size, from almost invisible pin-points of color to large irregular splotches. It was as if they were flecked with blood. Both pearls were alike.

Barney dropped back on to the paper the pearl he had been examining.

"Sure now, Wells—what are they wort'?" he asked.

Wells hesitated, thoughtful before answering.

"That's a hard question," he said slowly. "I want to be frank with you. You understand that, of course."

Barney nodded. He filled and lighted his pipe and began to puff out clouds of pungent smoke.

"Frankly," Wells went on, "these pearls are freaks. As such, they are out of my line. It's a big gamble to deal with freaks. Of course, pearl buying, at its best, is a gamble. As a buyer, I am always on the lookout for unusual pearls, meaning, by that, pearls of unusual beauty. Whenever I find one such—and you can believe me that they are rare—I'm always ready to pay top-notch prices and take a chance, gambling on making an advantageous resale."

Barney took the pipe from his mouth and grinned.

"Advantageous resale, eh! Then here's yer chance! Ain't these pebbles unusual?" He pointed at the pearls on the table.

Wells laughed.

"Yes; they are. They are unusually large. They are unusually perfect in shape. They are unusually well-matched. But their color—it's too unusual. And it isn't beautiful, not as pearl-beauty is judged. Really, that bloody flecking makes them hideous."

He shook his head.

"I'm afraid you are going to find them hard to sell," he finished. "A buyer would take an awful chance with them. To dispose of them, he'd have to find a purchaser who collected freaks. That would not be so easy to do."

Reid stirred lazily in his chair. He took the wilted cigaret from his lips and partially opened his sleepy eyes.

"Let's have your highest offer, Wells," he drawled. "Flat, now! We might drop the things. What are they worth to you as a buy—on a gamble?" Then he seemed to go back to sleep again.

Wells dropped the monocle from his eye. He glanced sharply first at Reid, then at Barney Hare.

"A thousand quid—each," he answered.

Barney gasped. Reid blinked an eye and yawned.

"Sorry," he said drowsily. "But I had an idea the —— things were worth a bit more than that. When I get an idea, I hate to change it, even if I know but little about pearls."

He got to his feet and stretched wearily.

"Have to refuse the offer, Wells. Thanks just the same. Barney, stick the things in your belt and let's get back to ship."

He started for the balcony steps.

"*Apai! Kaoha e!*" he murmured over a shoulder. "Come on, Barney! Heel along!"

Wells screwed the monocle into his eye and nodded after the partners.

"That offer stands while I'm in Papeete, gentlemen. I'll stay on until next steamer. If you should change your mind, let me know. And if you have any other pearls, I'd be glad to see them."

Reid grinned boyishly as he walked down the steps.

"We've a couple other pearls at the island," his sleepy voice drawled. "If you change your mind about the freaks, or if Papeete bores you—you've two weeks to wait—get a boat and sail out."

Wells walked to the edge of the balcony.

"I might do that," he said agreeably; and then he attempted a bit of banter— "Shall I have to bring my own water, Mr. Hare?"

Reid chuckled. Barney grimaced and spat with much disgust, as if even the mere mention of water provoked its insipid taste in his mouth. Barney Hare, all the islands knew, did not relish water.

"Water— Wurra! F'r yer thirst there's a bit of a pool we have. Not much, but 'twill suffice. An' if it's a bath ye're meanin'—sure, th' whole ocean's aroun' us."

THEY were a strange pair, for partners, the two men—Parker Reid, the seemingly always sleepy, ever easy-mannered gentleman, and Barney Hare, self-admitted rough-neck and rum-guzzling soldier of fortune; and it was strange gossip that was abroad in the islands about them. For one thing, they owned one of the few motor-equipped schooners that came to Papeete; for another, they were the only humans dwelling on a tiny atoll—a *motu*, no more—three days from the Basket of Water, as Papeete, once Vaiete, means.

There are but three main reasons for men like the partners to live on such an island, a tiny world apart: Trade, copra or pearls. Trade was beyond even a thought; their schooner was the only craft ever touching at the atoll. And such a *motu*, an isle, is scarcely suitable for a coconut plantation. True, trees will grow, and bear, but not in a number sufficient to produce copra enough to pay expenses, which is to say nothing of a profit. The surface of a *motu* is limited in area.

So but one reason remained—pearls; and it was *the* reason. The partners were pearlers, of a sort, though not of the kind that gather annually at Takaro for the *rahui*, the diving-season. Unlike those divers, mostly natives since the French now forbid the use of diving-suits, Reid and Barney Hare did not go from their own atoll, nor of a season did they fish much shell.

Yet, despite that, every season they had a pearl or two to offer to the highest bidding buyer—pearls that rivaled the choicest find of any of Takaro's *rahuis*. It was devils' magic, no less! *Aue!* Natives and whites, both, recalled the tale of the *Taote* of Pukapuka, who planted seed in living shell; and so the story grew of nights that the Sleepy One and the One-Who-Drank-No-Water cultured pearls.

Wells, the suave, heavy-jawed, monocle-wearing pearl buyer, who was of London and Paris and who always came to the Paumotus for the *rahui*, had heard two seasons before of the partners and of some of the pearls they had sold. Too, he had the word of suspicion that the pearls were cultured, but of that he had an opinion of his own. The season before he had purchased from another buyer one of the partners' pearls, and he had examined it.

Cultured pearls can be detected by the centers, which are usually beads of coral or nacre of mother-of-pearl. True pearls have for a core, generally, a grain of sand or a hollow where once was a worm. Now, to cut a pearl to get at the center, is, obviously, to ruin it—an expensive method of examination. Fortunately, there are other methods less destructive: The X-ray; ultra-violet light; drilling and probing with a mirror; sometimes spinning or revolving the suspected pearl on a thread and before a strong light, which is said to show the center, if the pearl be a culture, as a shadow denser than the pearl itself.

The pearl Wells had purchased and subsequently examined had not in its center any concealed telltales of culture. Like many a true pearl it was slightly hollow.

Wells had been surprized.

"By ——! If this is a cultured pearl, then that Reid's got the jump on Mikimoto—he's a second *Taote*, rivaling nature itself! If it's a natural pearl: They're either fishing deep, those partners or they've found an unexploited bed."

Then at Takaro, the following season, he heard more of the partners and of their latest—two blood-flecked pearls. Wells quit the Paumotus at once and went to Papeete in time to meet the partners during their monthly trip to Tahiti; to see with his own eyes the much talked of pearls. He saw, and he made the bid for them which was refused.

Though not in any sense pearl-wise, not even thoroughly familiar with the pearl buying market, the two pearlers did know that Wells had not been exactly truthful when he branded their two pearls as freaks. They were odd enough, those sea-gems, that they admitted; but they were far from freaks. They were rarities and a thousand pounds apiece was but a fractional part of their worth.

On the way back to the lagoon where their schooner was moored to the cannon half-buried in the white coral wall, the partners walked in silence. It was Barney Hare, who had the first word to say when they were on the deck of their craft.

"Th' —— take th' Wells now!" he exploded angrily. "A thousand quid! Is it fishin' th' baubles we are, does he think, f'r to make prisints of thim to th' likes of him! A thousand quid! ——! It's water I'd dhrink entirely 'fore I'd sell th' —— things for that!"

Reid chuckled.

"And in a week you'd be dead of rust of the in'ards," he told Barney. "An awful death that! Thank me; I saved you from it by refusing to sell at the bid!"

Barney spat overside.

"Yer thoughtful, no less."

"I'll admit it!" Reid grinned. "But it was for my own sake, too. I'd hate to have you around, dying such a lingering death. If you must kick in because of the pearls, I'd prefer it to be by some way that does it quicker."

"Like f'r instances?"

"Like a knife in the back or a tap on the head," Reid said.

Barney's eyes narrowed.

"Yer thinkin' there's danger of that?"

Reid lighted a cigaret and let it hang loosely from his lips. He shrugged.

"It's been done before now—and it will be done again."

Which was true. Barney knew it; but he grunted:

"Hmph! It'll need be a dark night 'fore I'm slid over th' rim like that."

"Perhaps," Reid admitted, climbing down the companion. "Which reminds me that there'll be no moon tonight. It's your watch, too. And I'm due to meet Devante at the Cercle Bougainville."

Barney drew down the corners of his mobile mouth.

"A long watch f'r me then, till ye come staggerin' home at th' break o' day! Wurra! Ye've put notions in me head! I'll load me a shotgun an' I'll camp in th' bows, an' —— help th' shaddow as flits across th' deck."

REID'S meeting at the island club, the Cercle Bougainville, with the trader Devante, had to do with some supplies the partners needed from San Francisco. He left the schooner after sunset, and when he went ashore, Barney Hare, true to his previously voiced determination, came on deck with a fully loaded shotgun and, after seeing to the craft's lights, settled himself in the bows to watch out the night.

"Whist, now!" he called after Reid. "I'll expect ye dhrunk an' about daybreak. If ye git thrown out of th' club afore, or ye come back that sober I'll no recognize yer footsteps, ye'll '*Erin go Bragh!*' an' save yersel' a colliction of buckshot in th' panties."

With a laugh Reid agreed and disappeared across the coral.

There was no moon. The night was dark with a warmth and softness like that of velvet. Barney sat with the loaded shotgun across his knees and smoked pipeful after pipeful of pungent tobacco. A long vigil is a long vigil, wearisome—Barney dozed.

Midnight. Barney slept sonorously. A shadow flitted across the deck. Two. The loaded shotgun was lightly frisked from the slumbering watchman's lap—and Barney woke strangling, with a sinewy arm beneath his chin, flattening his throat, and a naked knee firm-pressed into the small of his back.

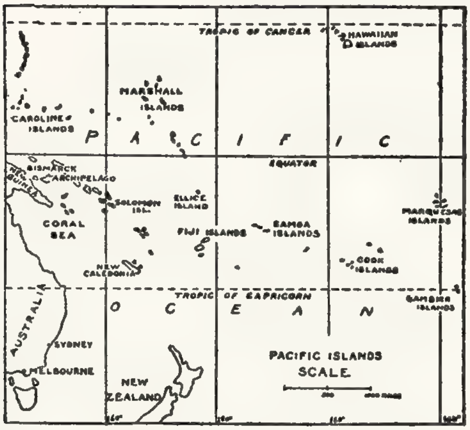
First instinct was to cry out, but that he could not do; no sound could he force from his compressed throat, nor could he suck needed air into his lungs. He fought to heave himself to his feet; the arm tightened about his throat, while the naked knee threatened his spine.

Barney relaxed, suddenly, let himself sag limply toward the deck. The ruse almost succeeded; the arm lessened the strangling squeeze upon his throat; the knee-pressure was removed from his back. Then Barney hurled himself forward, bending over abruptly. The strangler went flying over

Barney's head and landed with a heavy crash and grunt upon the deck.

The fellow was a Kanaka. The unexpected hurling to the deck had jarred him severely. Slowly and painfully he raised himself upon his hands and knees. He was hors de combat—for the time being, at least.

But his comrade was not. And him Barney had not noticed. So, when the native snatched a pin from the rail, stole across the deck and tapped Barney one dull tap behind the right ear, the blow came unexpectedly. Barney crumpled to the deck.



That happened at midnight. The fiery, furnace-like blast of the new sun at dawn, full in his face, roused Barney to the realization that, in a manner, he lived, owned a throbbing head and a burning thirst. For some moments after consciousness returned he did not move; he lay still and suffered the anguish of being alive.

Then he staggered weakly to his feet, stumbled to the companion and down to the cabin. A locker produced a bottle of square-face containing about half a pint. Barney downed it at a gulp and stood with eyes closed until the liquid fire spread its heat through his stomach. He flung the emptied bottle through a port and looked around.

The cabin was in wild disorder. Bunks, lockers, everything had been searched and with a thoroughness that left not a corner untouched. The storeroom, the holds—all were the same; the schooner had been combed, and exceedingly fine, from stem to stern. And when Barney put a hand into a pocket in quest of his pipe, he discovered that his own person had not been spared investigation. The contents of every pocket had been examined.

Barney, with a cold pipe in his mouth and a heavy thought in his mind, climbed back to the deck. Reid was just coming over the rail—Reid, cold sober though unsteady on foot, hatless, disheveled and torn.

Barney gaped at him.

"Sweet Marie! Ye've been ridin' wit' one of thim T'yti chauffeurs!"

Reid wagged his head negatively and groaned. He was decorated, over an eye, with a blue-black swelling lump which was already as large as a *kuku's* egg.

"I have not!" he denied. "I've been talking to a black —— with a club."

"Th' ——! Me own frien', no doubt of it!"

Reid blinked with surprize.

"You met him?"

"In a rough an' tumble manner, as ye might say. Six foot four he was, if he was an inch, and he was that! An' a son of *Po*,* I'll take me word. Anyway, he was one nifty gent in th' dark—givin' th' —— his due."

Reid surveyed his partner anxiously.

"Did he—" he began.

"He did not," Barney replied without waiting the finish of the question. "From stem t' stern, from keel t' mastheads, like as not th' well an' hawse-holes an' th' tanks of fuel—every stick an' cranny's been searched t' th' discomfit of th' —— cockroaches. But, at that, he didn't look in th' right place."

"What time were you boarded?"

"Midnight—thereabouts."

Reid leaned against the taffrail.

"Tackled me just about dawn on the beach yonder," he said, nodding toward the shore. "Jumped me without warning and knocked me cold. Went through me from my shoe-soles to my hat-band." He squinted painfully at Barney. "Where are the pearls?"

With a wide grin, Barney went to the mainmast boom and from one end, from the folds of the furled mainsail, he pulled a square of paper which he tossed to Reid.

"There's the pretties!" he exclaimed. "An' now just take a look at 'em. If there ain't a fresh splotch of blood on each of thim pebbles, thin nary's th' splotch that's on thim at all."

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* Po: the Prince of Darkness; Marquesan.

Reid unfolded the square of paper and rolled the pearls into a hand.

"They're splotched!" he said. "But whether they've acquired an extra spot or not, I don't know. They've acquired something else, however, a jump in value of about a thousand quid each."

Barney smiled happily.

"'Tis th' same idea, sure enough. An' now there's no doubt in me mind at all that it was th' instigations of th' Wells as made th' pretties that much more valuable of a single night. If, in th' end, it but comes out of his pocket, I'll feel well-pleased an' entirely satisfied wit' me rap on th' head."

Reid shoved the pearls into a trouser-pocket.

"It was Wells, all right," he agreed with his partner. "And that knowledge is a caution, Barney. Papeete is no place for us. We'll leave with the tide."

Barney pulled a long face.

"What of that Wells?" he demanded. "A tap on th' head f'r th' bot' of us we got f'r th' trouble of showin' him th' pearls! Is it a compliment we git an' don't repay?"

"We repay that compliment when we sell the pearls, by getting a thousand pounds each more than we originally intended to get."

"Oh, sure!" Barney exclaimed impatiently. "But where's th' joy in that if it's not th' Wells that's nicked f'r th' same thousan's? Right now he's here in Pap'te an' we're f'r sailin' away."

Reid shrugged.

"Maybe I'm wrong," he said to his partner, "but I'm riding a hunch that Wells will be nicked. I'm guessing that he'll follow, close behind us."

LIKE most atolls of the Paumotus and neighboring groups, the *motu* on which the partners made their headquarters was by nature unequipped for the habitation of white men. Low-lying, scarcely two feet above water at flood tide, composed entirely of coral, the islet gave from its bowels not so much as one drop of sweet water. There were no springs; no place was there anywhere on the coral dot where a well could be put down and find other than salt water.

Natives of these atolls get along with surprizingly little water. Of the two partners, Barney Hare approached nearest the native with his ability to do without the sweet aqueous medium; but even Barney Hare needed water. To meet this need, the men had built a shallow reservoir of coral, to catch and hold a measure of the tropical rains. This water they used sparingly, for rains are uncertain, and as much as possible their thirst was slaked with the wine of young, green coconuts and, sometimes, gin and rum.

In their hurry to leave Papeete after the double assault upon their persons, no time was taken to fill the schooner's water-tanks. It was a three-day sail from Tahiti to the *motu* and Reid decided that there was water enough on board to tide them over.

There was—just enough! Barney, as the cook, used the last pint for a pot of coffee, and weak coffee at that, the very morning the islet was sighted. They drove through the opening in the boiling, treacherous reef, hove to and ate breakfast before going ashore.

Then they debarked. Barney was the first to step ashore. He rapped the hot ash from his stubby pipe, against the leathery palm of a hand, and turned to Reid with a curious grin upon his sun-reddened face.

"I hope ye're spared a shock whin I tell ye, but it's a bit of a thirst f'r water I have."

He crossed the beach, studded with rough lumps of coral, toward the steel-roofed shack they called a home. Behind the shack was the reservoir for the catching and holding of rain-water. He was out of Reid's sight but a moment when the latter heard him roar with mingled anger and dismay.

Reid started on a run to the reservoir.

"What's wrong now?" he called out. "Get some up your nose?"

"—— a bit! Nor will ye either. Give a look here! Then show me one dhrop of our precious water!"

Reid looked—and he was speechless with surprize. The reservoir had been brimming when they had left for Tahiti. Now it was empty, and the white coral of bottom and sides were sun-dried and burning, as moist-free as bleached, old bones.

It took but a single glance about the banked up coral, which had formed the sides of the pond, to find an instant explanation as to what had become of the water. One wall, toward the sea, contained a broken gap.

A dozen quick strides carried Barney to the gap. Again a glance, and the gap was explained.

"Dynamite!" Barney growled.

"Dynamite!" Reid echoed.

Then both partners looked at each other and one word came simultaneously from their lips:

"Wells!"

Reid's mind was sped with nimble thoughts. He sat on a lump of coral and screwed up his eyes against the pitiless glare of sky, beach and sea.

"Again it's Wells! No doubt!" he declared after a moment. "If you'll remember, Barney, when we left the Cercle Bougainville after talking with Wells, then you'll remember we passed old Ellworth just outside. He was going in as we went out."

Barney nodded quickly.

"I remimber."

"And do you remember, too, that Ellworth's *Shark* cleared port about an hour after that?"

Barney nodded again.

"My faith! Ye're right! I remimber, an' I'll remimber t' me dyin' day."

Reid stood up.

"May that day be far in the future, Barney," he said earnestly. "In the meanwhile I'm thirsty!"

The situation was unpleasant, not without some danger, yet it could not be said to be desperate—not really. Though they were entirely without water to drink, the partners were not in any immediate danger of perishing of thirst. Both on board the schooner and in their shack they had a goodly supply of rum, wines and gin, and there were a number of coconut-trees growing on the *motu*. And there is hardly a more refreshing drink than the milk of a young nut.

Strangely enough it was Barney Hare who, at first, felt most keenly their lack of water. He had landed that morning with the desire for a drink, and that desire, unsatiated, grew with the day. He was in a sullen mood during the evening meal when he was compelled to drink wine rather than the customary coffee.

THE following day he spent much of his time watching the barometer hung on the side of the shack or scanning the horizon for signs of a squall. A squall would mean rain, water to drink, but throughout the day both glass and sky remained unchanged. That night Barney tramped the beach, and in every language and lingo he knew cursed the whole scheme of the universe and the fact that Man ever had got his first taste of water. It was damnable, no less! The stuff was a drug! Else why did he crave like a fiend for it?

The next day Barney felt better and was more like his usual self, with his usual distaste of water. Reid, however, woke at dawn with a high fever. Toward noon he went into delirium and cried for water. Barney offered all there was to offer, cool milk of a coconut; but when Reid tasted of the fluid, he spat it out with a curse, and wild of eyes and raving like a madman, he rose from his cot and drove his partner from the shack.

An hour after the sun had crossed the line, Barney thought he detected signs of a coming squall. As if suddenly possessed of the strength of a dozen men, he flung himself to the heartbreaking task of repairing the gap blasted in the coral wall of the reservoir. He was three hours at the work; and when he was done the sky was as brassy as the eyes of a brazen woman.

Dog-weary, Barney trudged back to the shack. Reid was sleeping restlessly, moaning as he breathed. His skin was as hot to touch as the coral sands and without a sign of perspiration. Barney swore with considerable feeling. He took a full quart of gin from a case and carried the bottle outside where he knocked off the neck against a lump of coral. He gulped the stinging stuff raw. In thirty minutes he was ugly drunk.

The blazing sun was swinging low in the west when the drunken pearler spotted a sail standing in toward the opening in the reef. He staggered to the shack and got Reid's binoculars which he leveled at the sail. The craft was a schooner—Ellworth's *Shark*.

Water! With that one thought foremost in his mind Barney Hare stumbled across the beach to the whaleboat. Before he had the craft launched, the *Shark* was through the reef, sails spilled free of wind and fluttering down; chains were rattling in the hawse-pipes as fore and aft anchors let go.

To Barney's surprize, it was Wells, the suave pearl buyer, instead of Ellworth, who hailed him from the *Shark's* deck.

"Pleasant evening, Mr. Hare!" was the monocled one's greeting. "Climb aboard and have a slug of gin."

The whaleboat bumped the schooner's side. Barney dropped the oars and stood up.

"Water!" he croaked thickly. "Wells—f'r th' love of Hivven!—water!"

Wells took the monocle from his eyes and laughed with much amusement.

"Water? My word, Hare! Now that is a joke—that you ask for water." And he added to his laughter.

Barney clambered over the rail and almost sprawled on to the deck.

"Water!" he rasped. "Water!" It was the one thought in his mind, the one word his drunken lips could form.

"Water!"

Wells took him by the arm.

"Oh, come now, Hare! Water—you know you disdain the stuff! Come below and nip a peg of gin."

Barney threw off the pearl buyer's arm.

"T' —— wit' yer gin!" he snarled with all the ugliness that was his at the moment. "It's water I want! Ye hear me, man. Water!"

Wells replaced the monocle in his eye and assumed a face of surprize.

"I'm very much afraid that I do not understand," he replied.

Barney stepped up close to the man and threatened the glittering eye-glass with a freckled fist.

"Water—ye pot-bellied cockney lunkhead! Water!" he yelled. "D'ye undershtan' that? I want a cask of water! An' I want it quick!"

Wells retreated a step.

"Oh, now! I see! A cask of water!" He smiled suavely, with the sudden light of comprehension in his eyes. "My word, yes! Of course! I'll see the captain."

Hastily he stepped to the companion and disappeared down into the cabin. Shortly he returned to deck followed by Ellworth, a tall, weather-blackened individual who drooled tobacco-juice from both corners of his mouth and who was clad solely in a filthy pair of trousers and a battered sunburned straw hat.

"What th' —— you 'owlin' water about?" he demanded of Barney. "Think I'm sailin' a water-tanker habout th' —— hocean?"

Barney ground rage between his teeth.

"I want a cask of water," he said as civilly as he could. "Reid's got a fever. He wants water. Ain't had any now f'r three days."

Ellworth ejected a stream of tobacco-juice overside. For a moment he rolled the quit about in his mouth, then he grinned and displayed long, yellow-stained teeth.

"If you'd come aboard 'owlin' for a keg o' rum, Hi could 'commodate you with pleasure," he told Barney. "But water's—hit's a different proposition. 'Ere we're three days from T'yti with only three full casks aboard. 'Bout twenty gallon each. They's four o' us, figurin' th' two Kanakas, an' I dassn't take a chance."

Barney spat out a sizzling oath. The fire of the gin was still in his head.

"—— f'rgive me f'r sthandin' on a deck wit' th' likes of ye, ye stinkin' scum of th' sea! Ye'll deny water t' a dyin' man——"

Overwhelmed with his anger, Barney would have anathematized Ellworth with his last breath had not Wells seized him by the arm.

"Easy! Easy now, Hare! Don't get excited! Let me handle this!"

He turned to the captain.

"Ellworth, Hare's a bit under the weather and quite excited. He probably doesn't realize all that he is saying. That's perfectly natural; neither of us would be much different up against the same situation—a fevered partner and three days without water."

Ellworth wiped his drooled, stubbled chin with the back of a hand.

"What th' ——'s that to me?" he wanted to know, and his voice was absolutely devoid of feeling. "Strike me pink, if Hi'm hany —— water-boy of th' —— hocean, not for hany soused beach-comber what ain't got sense henough to ship 'is own! What's th' bloomin' lay? 'Cause 'is partner's touched with th' sun, Hi suppose Hi'm supposed to sell hout my blinkin' water like some free an' heasy go-to——! Hi!"

Wells held up a silencing hand.

"Now listen, Ellworth," he commanded. "Of course I'm only a passenger. You're the captain of this schooner and the water is yours. Your word goes. But this is an unusual situation. These men have been three days without water to drink, and one of them is now seriously ill. We've got water——"

"Water!" yelled Ellworth. "Blisterin' ——! 'Ow much water 'ave we got? Hi! Less'n sixty gallon. An' they's four of us an' we're three days from T'yti, not figurin' hany squalls. We're liable to get a touch of the sun oursel's."

"True," Wells had to admit. "But I think we can take a chance. I'm willing to, on my part. On a pinch the Kanakas can get along with rum, and they'll be glad to get it. Let's divide with Hare and Reid. That will leave us thirty gallons. We ought to make Papeete with that."

The captain wagged his head.

"No. Too much of a chance. I wouldn't do it, not for a thousand quid."

Wells smiled at that.

"Would you for two thousand, captain?"

Ellworth gulped and then spat hastily.

"Eh!" he exclaimed. "What! Two thousand quid for thirty gallon of water?"

"Exactly!"

A greedy light was in the captain's eye. Still he hesitated.

"An' trust that —— beach-comber? Hi! Not today."

Wells produced a fat wallet from a pocket. He had come to the *rahui* well heeled with funds.

"Cash down, captain," he offered, opening the wallet. "I'll trust him. I'll foot the bill. Hare can pay me."

Barney was stunned. Here was generosity, of a sort seldom found among men of the southern seas! And to the moment he had been in his mind accusing Wells of the predicament he and Reid were in—without water! Had they misjudged Wells?

"No, no!" Barney ejaculated hastily. "Wells, ye're a gintlemin! But—no! Two thousan' quid! Wurra! I can't repay it. I haven't—nor Reid—that much money."

Wells waved aside the protest.

"No need to worry about that. You've pearls to sell. I'm a pearl buyer. If we can come to any agreement about the pearls you have, the matter of these few trifling quid can easily be settled."

PEARLS! The word was like a dash of cold water in the face; and drunk as he was, Barney Hare was clear-brained enough to sense the reason behind Wells' great show of generosity. Papeete—the search of the schooner by night—the double assault upon Reid and himself—the *motu* and the gap dynamited in the coral bank of the reservoir—it all came back to him now.

And he saw clearly that it was all part of a scheme engineered by the suave, monocled pearl buyer; a scheme to gain possession of the two blood-flecked pearls. Ellworth was in on the game. After blasting the wall of the reservoir, he had turned back and picked up Wells who had left Papeete on some other craft, and this scene which had been enacted on the deck of the *Shark* was just a part of the plot.

Barney felt his rage suddenly go cold within him; and cold rage is dangerous rage, for it is not impetuous; it is careful, deliberate, always without haste. Wells was crafty; Barney Hare grew crafty. The two men were deceiving him, he knew; he would deceive them.

"My faith!" he exclaimed, and he almost blushed as if ashamed of his stupidity. "Pearls! T' be sure! I'd f'rgotten thim entirely! Those bloody ones now, Wells, ye offered a thousan' quid each at Papeete."

Wells nodded.

"The offer still holds, Hare."

Barney beamed with delight.

"It's th' price of yon pirate's water. I'll go ashore an' git thim immedjiately. Ye sthand by, Wells, an' see to it that th' tobaccy-eatin' cutthroat gives' me full measure—thirty gallons."

"With pleasure," Wells promised. "Take my word for it, you will not be one gill shy."

Barney tumbled over the railing, down into the whaleboat, picked up the oars and rowed for the beach. He was fairly sober by now, and his first act, after beaching the whaleboat, was to go to the shack and half-empty a bottle of raw rum. He looked in at Reid, who tossed in restless slumber; then he took his partner's trousers from a peg and removed the pearls from a pocket.

He grinned wickedly, when he held the two blood-flecked pearls in his freckled hand.

"Th' price of thirty gallons of filthy water," he mused. "Th' water we need an' th' water we'll have! An' it's a price I'll pay f'r it, though it'll not be pearls."

He carried the two pearls outside, to the rear of the shack; and close to one corner of the building he buried the things in the coral. When he was done, he went to the storeroom and broke open a box whose label cried to him to be cautious. He was not cautious. From the box he took a stick, a single stick. A few moments later he left the storeroom and returned to the beached whaleboat.

WELLS, smiling and suave, met Barney Hare once more at the rail of the *Shark* and extended a hand to help the pearler to the deck.

"The water is ready, Hare," he said pleasantly. He nodded toward two casks near to the rail.

'An' th' price is in me panties," Barney told him, with a laugh that comes of rum. "All I ask now is that ye give me a sort of receipt f'r th' things. I've a hunch, I have, that I'll have need f'r th' thing whin Reid recovers."

"Certainly! Certainly!" Wells was more than anxious to please. "Come down to the cabin. We'll seal the bargain with a slug of gin."

The two men climbed down the companion to the cabin. Ellworth was there, sprawled out on a settle built along two sides of the room. Wells got paper and pen, and sat down at the table to draw up the receipt. Barney shoved a hand under the waistband of his trousers and pulled out—a stick.

Wells dropped his pen. The monocle fell from his eyes and rattled on the table. Ellworth sat up abruptly. The tobacco-juice drooled freely from between his half-opened lips.

"What's that?" Both men spoke the question, seemingly, in a single voice.

"It's a stick of dynamite," Barney told them very simply; but there was an edge to his voice that gave a chill to the spines of the two startled men. "Dynamite—th' same as ye used t' waste our water."

Neither man said a word. Ellworth chewed audibly on his inevitable quid. Wells did not make a sound. He scarcely seemed to breathe. Neither had eyes for more than the stick of dynamite Barney Hare held in his hand.

It was a full stick that the pearler had, and one end was capped with a detonator. From the cap protruded a very short length of fuse. The end of the fuse was split, and in the split was tied the head of a match. This match-head Barney now held against the table. One brisk stroke would ignite it, and one split second would fire the cap.

"You, Ellworth!" Barney was saying in an icy voice. "Hail thim Kanakas of yers an' have thim heave into me boat every dhrop of water ye've got on this craft. Mind ye now! No funny work! Remimber I know th' lingo as well as ye do."

Ellworth hastily emptied his mouth of tobacco and yelled at the two deck-hands. Barney heard their feet patter on the deck overhead and then the thump of the four water-casks as they were heaved into the whaleboat. *Four.* He counted them.

He nodded when again it was quiet on the deck.

"Now tell thim black —— t' git f'r'ard where they belong!"

Again Ellworth raised his voice obediently.

"Now, th' two of ye—on deck ahead of me! An' watch yer step!"

Wells and Ellworth got to their feet and without a word climbed the companion to the deck. Marching behind them with the threatening capped and fused stick of dynamite, Barney drove them forward to the forecastle, herded them in with the two Kanakas and closed the hatch. In another moment he was overside, in the whaleboat, pulling hurriedly for the beach.

The short tropical twilight was done as the boat grounded on the coral; abruptly the world plunged into night. Barney leaped over, waist-deep in the water, and shoved the whaleboat high on the sand. Then he threw out the four water-casks and rolled them, one by one, to the shack. He knocked the bung from one, drew a gourd of water and splashed it into Reid's flushed face. Reid woke with a gasp and an infantile wail for water. Barney poured a bit between his lips.

Then he barricaded the shack and loaded a rifle. Until dawn he tended Reid, giving him from time to time a little more than a dribble of the water; and he kept the rifle handy and his ears alert for sounds from the beach.

DAWN came — flaming tropical dawn. Reid was sleeping peacefully. Since midnight he had been quiet; now his face was not so flushed nor was his skin so hot to the touch. The fever had abated greatly.

Barney sighed with heartfelt relief. He eyed the water-casks thirstily. His throat and tongue were thick and dry, rum-scorched, crusted, and every fiber of his being cried for water. He went down on his knees beside the four kegs, and one of them he shook and rocked, making the water within the thing splash about; and he laughed childishly as he listened to the gurgling, sweet liquid music that it made.

Suddenly he jumped to his feet.

"No!" he said. "No!" He laughed another, a different laugh. "No! Th' ——! Git ye behin' me Satan! Wurra! 'Tis sweet water ye are, but it's rum I'll dhrink! Sure, now would ye have me take dhrink from a near perishin' man? My faith! Thin I'd be no better—worse, I'd be!—thin th' pirates out yon."

He went to the door of the shack and flung it open. The *Shark* was still inside the reef, but there was a bustle on board. He could hear the chains drawing through the hawse-pipes, and he saw the forward anchor break surface as it was hauled up. The aft anchor followed; then the sails jerkily mounted the masts. Slowly the schooner went about and pointed bowsprit toward the opening in the reef.

The reef was boiling with the turning of the tide. Green-blue sea churned to foam upon the jagged coral; it roared; white water flung high toward the blazing morning sky. The *Shark* shook full her sails with wind and held on. Ellworth stood at the wheel.

Few men, who sail much among the Dangerous Isles, are there who attempt passage of the island reefs with their schooners. It is a reckless stunt, foolish in the extreme, highly dangerous. It is a trick only for skilled seamen, born of generations of skilled seamen and taught their forebears' ways; it demands knowledge that comes only of an intimate acquaintance with each tiny isle; knowledge more than that of wind and sea craft; knowledge that is an uncanny instinct, a keenly balanced sixth sense that is more than all the five senses combined. And for many even so endowed the reefs have spelled disaster. The Dangerous Isles—they have been truly named!

Sober, Ellworth was a fair master of his craft. Drunk, he was a reckless sailor. And this particular morning he was drunk. At the *Shark's* wheel, he caught the schooner's sails full of wind and literally hurled the plunging craft at the narrow, furiously boiling opening in the reef.

He missed. A point too much to starboard he put the wheel and with a grinding crash, audible to Barney Hare even above the roar of the bar, the *Shark* struck.

That was all. Furious water did the rest, and it veiled its act beneath a smother of foam. Fate stood by. Lives the sea did not take; the schooner it smashed to driftwood, but the four men, as if spurned by its maw, it cast upon the beach.

Noon came. Overhead hung a pitiless sun; and coral, sky and sea seemed bent on rivaling its glare. The shipwrecked men broiled alive. They sought what shade they could find beneath the few coco-palms. With every hour they drank the wine of a green, young nut.

Then Ellworth went amuck. The sun got him on the third day. He had lost his straw hat in the wreck of the *Shark*, and of carelessness and some necessity he had gone about bareheaded. With a drawn knife he drove the two Kanakas up a palm-tree, and he attacked Wells and would have killed him had not Barney gone to the rescue and stretched the crazed man out flat with a rap on the head done with his rifle-barrel. As it was, Wells was badly, though not dangerously, cut; and all that night Barney could hear him moaning for water.

The dawn of the next, the fourth, day brought Wells staggering to the shack where he collapsed before the door. On his hands and knees he crawled to the one low step and begged for a drink:

"Water, Hare! In God's name—water!"

Barney stood in the opened door and looked down upon him, contemptuously.

"Water, eh! So ye come t' pray me th' prayer I prayed ye a few days back. I prayed it, from my heart, f'r a sickened man. Ye pray it from yer belly, f'r yersel'. Ye have only thirst. F'r yer thirst I have what ye offered me—gin. Will ye have it?"

"Water!" Wells implored.

"T' —— wit' ye!" Barney snapped. "It's —— th' bit of fever ye have. Ye're not sick."

"But, man alive, I haven't tasted water in four days—" The pearl buyer whimpered.

Barney sneered.

"Nor I in eight. Off me beach, ye whelp, 'fore I boot ye off."

Painfully Wells got to his feet and staggered away. Barney turned back into the shack where Reid, now free of fever but too weak as yet to try his feet, lay in a hammock.

Reid had heard Wells' plea for water and Barney's flat refusal.

"Better give him a drink, Barney," he suggested sympathetically. "It's an awful thing to do without."

Barney grunted.

"Ye're tellin' me somethin', bhoy, but not such a lot at that! If th' man was sick, hot wit' th' fever or th' likes of that, then I'd share me last pint wit' him. I would wit' th' ——. Th' Wells is —— enough—me wor-rd f'r it!—but he's not sick. Not one dhrop does he git."

Barney was firm, but he was not without heart. He was too Irish for that. He risked his hide against the edge of Ellworth's knife three times during the day and carried to the sun-maddened man a good measure of water. And as he played the nurse, he was compelled to keep a watchful eye on Wells and the two Kanakas.

Ellworth was lying under a coco-palm, near to the wall of the reservoir he had ruined with a well-planted charge of dynamite. Throughout the day he had been rather quiet. Toward sunset Barney Hare came toward him from the shack, carrying a gourd of water. It was Barney's fourth trip. Wells and the two Kanakas were seated on the coral near the fever-stricken man.

Ellworth watched the pearler's approach, and there was an insane gleam in his eyes. He did not move until Barney was a pace or two from him. Then suddenly his arm whipped out. There was a flickering flash of hard-flung steel.

Barney ducked. The knife whizzed past his head. A hot oath died on his lips unsaid. As if the flinging of the steel had been a prearranged signal, Wells and the two Kanakas jumped for him.

Barney dropped the gourd of water. He jumped quickly to one side to avoid, as much as possible, the combined rush of the three. He struck out, without regard for aim or man, and his hard, freckled fist connected solidly with a Kanaka jaw just beneath an ear. Bone crunched. The black boy, with a scream of pain, went to his knees and clapped a hand to his broken jaw.

At his comrade's squeal of hurt, the other Kanaka drew back an instant. And that instant's hesitation spelled his doom. Barney resorted to the primitive. He grabbed a broken lump of coral from the ground and hurled it with angry might. It thudded against the black one's temple and toppled him over backward and laid him without a kick upon the ground.

BY THIS time Ellworth had struggled to his feet, yelling all the while like a madman. Fever-weakened, the captain's legs would not support him. He had spirit for the fray; but two steps forward was the best he could do. He sat down abruptly, and rocking himself upon the sand, he alternately swore and wept with rage.

Barney suddenly remembered Wells. He whirled, to see what had become of the man. Wells had charged by, to where Ellworth's knife had fallen in the sand. He had snatched up the blade and with it in his hand he came toward Barney.

Barney was unarmed, but with a bull-like bellow he rushed to meet the pearl buyer. There was no chance to sidestep the sweep of the knife. With a grunt, Barney took the full length of the sharp blade in the side. Then his arms closed about Wells.

Wells was big in bulk, but rum and the tropics had softened him, and the ordeal of the past four days had sapped his strength. He gasped in the tightening, crushing grip of Barney's gorilla arms; and he struggled to free the knife. But free the knife he could not do; Barney held his arms pinned against his sides. He could not even heave himself free.

Just one weapon remained to him and he used it. He bent his head forward and closed his teeth together in Barney's tensely corded neck.

Outraged beyond the power of uttering a sound, Barney picked Wells up bodily in his arms and hurled him violently to the ground, himself on top. The fall jarred Wells enough that he jerked his hand from the embedded knife. Instantly Barney was on his feet again. He plucked the steel thing from his side and threw it from him, far, toward the sea.

Wells started to get up. Barney waited until the man was well on his feet. Then with a vicious full-arm smash to the jaw he knocked him down. Again Wells got up. Again Barney knocked him down. And again and again. He scorned to strike the fellow while he lay upon the ground; but every time the pearl buyer found his feet, the pearler, with a knuckle-swollen fist, struck him down. At last, with a weary groan, Wells, after a final, unsuccessful attempt to rise, slumped back and lay gasping on his side.

Barney turned from him and weaved drunkenly across the coral to the shack. He got another gourd of water, filling it from a cask. Back to the four men he went, and, black and white alike, he dashed a bit in their faces and poured some between their lips. Ellworth swore at him childishly, drank of the water, and then swore again. The two Kanakas were mute. Wells was the only one who displayed reason.

"You win!" he gasped brokenly, after choking on a mouthful of water. "You win—Hare! You're—a man! We're—as you called me—whelps! And I'm a sick one now. We all are. You've beaten us—me—at our own game. You win! Now give us of your mercy—and water."

Barney handed him the gourd and what water was left in it. Wells drank it slowly. When it was empty he put it down and from a pocket he drew his fat wallet.

"Hare," he said between deep breaths, "I offered you two thousand pounds for those blood-flecked pearls. I knew you boys wouldn't accept that offer. But I meant to have the pearls, one way or another. I've failed in one way. I imagine I'll fail in the only other way that is left me. I don't imagine you'll sell me those pearls now, even at full price. They're worth twenty thousand pounds."

He opened the wallet and laid it on the ground.

"Hare, here's thirty thousand pounds—every farthing I have with me. I'm not offering it for the pearls. I won't insult you by offering it for water. I'm simply offering to pay whatever the damage is that I have caused you. More, I'm asking you not to let the three men with me suffer for want of water; and that you will give them passage on your schooner back to Papeete."

Barney scratched his chin thoughtfully for a moment. Then he bent down and picked up the wallet. He counted out twenty thousand pounds and shoved the notes in a pocket. The wallet containing the remaining ten thousand he handed back to Wells.

"All in all, it'll be wort' about that," he said.

He assisted Wells to the shack and sat him down on the step. Then he went around to the back of the shack where he scraped for a time in the coral. Finished with his digging, he entered the shack and rolled out two full casks of water. He removed the bungs.

"There!" he exclaimed. "It ain't as sweet as it might be, but wit' a bit of flavorin' it'll pass."

And into the opened bung-holes he dropped, in each one, a single blood-flecked pearl. Then he sighed deeply.

"Wurra! It has been a day of days! Tomorrow, come dawn, we'll be sailin' f'r Pap'te."

SUN-STROKING THE SIDE-WINDER

by Eugene Cunningham

PERHAPS the oddest thing in nature is a creature seeming to prosper in a certain environment, which is in some important detail *unfitted* for that very environment. As interesting illustration of such a paradox, consider the desert side-winder.

This small, dreaded species of the rattlesnake—*Crotalus cerastes*—differs in several respects from others of the rattler-genus: It is smaller; its habitat is near-waterless desert; it has two protuberances over the eyes, like small horns; it moves by a series of curling forward-thrusts, so that it leaves a trail not continuous, but consisting of short, diagonal lines a few inches apart.

The paradox above-mentioned is the fact that it has been proved the side-winder *cannot endure the rays of the sun!* Exposure to direct sunlight in summer is fatal to the side-winder; fatal in a period of minutes. One observer states that with a temperature of 106 degrees in the shade, exposure of three minutes brought languor, and in ten minutes the side-winder was dead. With a midsummer desert temperature of 116 degrees to 120 degrees, it seems probable that —as other observers claim—exposure of no more than two or three minutes would be fatal.

It is noteworthy, in considering this phenomenon, that the side-winder coils in the shade of desert vegetation by day, doing his journeying after dark.

The Indomitable Dub

A Complete Novelette

by Thomson Burtis

Author of "Some Afternoon Calls," "Human Contraband," etc.

I CAME to know him on my first day of active service—and his. It was in 1917, the day we both reported at Princeton for eight weeks of ground-school. A hundred and eleven brand new flying cadets were gathered in a building which had been set aside by the university for cadets. Every one was more or less ill at ease, waiting for something to happen and wondering what it would be.

I was leaning on a big table in the center of the room, looking over one of these magazines which are one-third advertisements, another third pictures, and most of the remaining third blurbs by the editor announcing how good the stories are which trickle in thin streams of print through the maze of more important matter. When I threw it down my eyes fell on the little chap who was standing near by, watching all that went on with a pair of very bright blue eyes.

My attention was attracted to him because he was so small. He looked as if he'd have to stand on a step-ladder to kick a duck in the stomach. Not an inch over five feet tall, I don't believe, and he reminded me of a pert, somewhat rumpled sparrow. Incidentally, he was later to be known throughout the army as "Sparrow" Morse.

He had on a brown suit which was a little too big for him, and a collar which had been constructed for a slightly larger neck. He had his hat in his hand, exposing to the naked eye mouse-colored hair which was cut in a stiff, brush pompadour. The separate spikes were not under control, and bristled to all points of the compass. His small, square face was brown as a berry, and pleasantly homely. A snub-nose, an over-sized mouth, and those very bright blue eyes formed a combination which was far from classic, but which nevertheless reflected an attractive personality.

He glanced up at me, and his eyes held. He looked at me for all the world like a somewhat seedy, slightly disreputable but very cocky pup, prepared either to wag his tail and make friends or turn away apologetically, holding no hard feelings.

I started a fire on the end of my cigaret, and offered him the case.

"Thanks," he said.

He took one, and smiled a nice smile.

"It sure seems great to be making a start, isn't it?"

His voice was rather high, and there was a New England twang to his speech.

"It does to me," I said sourly. "It's taken me five months, a total of three examinations, two weeks in a hospital to lose tonsils and adenoids, and close to a thousand dollars in expenses to persuade the Government to condescend to accept me."

"You ain't seen nothin' yet," he grinned. "Look at my size—and I never saw a college. Figure what *I* had to do to get in!"

From my own experience of physical examinations which took days to complete, of psychological tests galore, and of additional requirements which seemed to include everything from the date of my great-grandfather's marriage to my ability at billiards, I was impressed by the significance of his words. From what I knew the little chap was absolutely ineligible on at least two counts.

"Did you have a drag?" I asked him. "Know the head of your examining board or something?"

He shook his head.

"Got turned down in Boston, and made three trips to Washington. Hoboed once, when I didn't have the money. Ended up by being so mad I cried in front of the doctors and then offered to lick 'em all," he said calmly. "And they finally let me in. By the way, my name is Morse—Jethro Morse, Plymouth, Massachusetts."

"Morton," I told him as I shook hands. "No particular address, although I was born in New York."

Just then some officers came in, and we started through the mill—registering, drawing equipment, getting assigned to quarters, and the rest of the routine.

My name, Morton, put me next to Morse on the alphabetical list of the class, and this was responsible for our being assigned as room-mates. That same fact had quite a bit to do with the future careers of both of us.

"I hope you don't mind," he said shyly, when the formation had broken.

I was twenty-eight, considerably older than the average cadet, and possibly my soreness at the army in general and the Air Service in particular had been reflected in my manner. So I said—

"Suits me to a T, old-timer," and tried to make it cordial.

We were housed in one of the regular university dormitories, and within an hour we were settled. This was Saturday, and we had nothing to do until Monday except procure some books and things from the Post Exchange. Morse had his within an hour after lunch, and he settled down to study.

"I understand this is a —— of a course," he said, "and I'm no intellectual prodigy. I'm small enough as it is, but if my body was whittled down to the size of my brain I'd be invisible to the naked eye."

He grinned cheerfully, and fell to work on a wireless buzzer, following that with a plunge into a book on aviation motors and topping off, in the evening, with a tome on airplanes. There was a certain fury of concentration about him—I could fairly feel the tense effort he was making. He sat rigidly in his chair, head resting on his hands, and studied grimly. Sunday was the same story—from morning to night, with time off for meals, he was at it.

Monday the grind started. I had had two years at West Point, eight years before, and I could see that the Academy system had been transplanted and made harder. From five o'clock reveille to lights out at ten we had a total of thirty minutes to ourselves.

In eight weeks we were supposed to learn enough about motors to take one down and put it together again, to send and receive fifty characters a minute by the International code; have a good knowledge of military law, become expert on aerodynamics and the theory of flight; rig an airplane; drill a regiment; adjust artillery fire by wireless code, and drill three hours a day. There were six hundred cadets in the corps, a new class entering and the senior squadron graduating each week.

Morse's troubles started immediately. Right from the start the instructors rode him hard. Being so small, he was very conspicuous, and he was just a natural bull in a china shop. At drill he was always a second behind the rest of the squadron in executing a command; and if there was a man out of step it was usually Morse. Although he slaved over his books as I have never seen a man slave before, his recitations were vague and fumbling. His very eagerness helped defeat him, and oftentimes his strained efforts to make a perfect answer made his mental processes seem confused. He drew a continuous fire of sarcasm from irritated instructors.

He took his medicine—and continuous, bitter medicine it was—without flinching, but often there was a wistful, puzzled question in his eyes. It was as if he could not understand his own futility, and was wondering why he could not come up to the mark. He was determinedly cheerful, and jeered at himself in a way that made the good-natured gibes of the rest of the class seem mild.

Week by week the squadron shrank as the

Friday examinations took their toll. One failure meant dropping back a class, two meant discharge. The strained ferocity with which Sparrow went at his tests was enough to make even me nervous. He was a wreck from Friday to Saturday noon, when the fateful lists were posted.

It was a continuous strain on every one, and yet even in that crowd of worried men who were working their hardest, the prodigious efforts of Sparrow Morse became a byword. In the five minutes between classes he would practise on a buzzer he carried in his pocket, or else delve into a book. There was rarely a moment of relaxation for him.

And yet, particularly on the drill field, he was having a harder and harder time, partly because his mistakes were remembered so well. One day our drill officer, a second lieutenant who had been a regular army sergeant for twenty years, caught Sparrow in a continuous series of mistakes. The climax came when he got his gun on the left shoulder at the command of, "Right shoulder, arms!"

He walked over in front of Sparrow, pulled him out in front of the squadron, and gave him the nastiest dressing down I ever listened to, even in the army. He topped off with:

"You couldn't run a wheelbarrow, say nothin' of an airplane! One more bull like that one, and you're recommended for discharge!"

It was an ultimatum, and every one of the squadron knew it. Sparrow stood at rigid attention, strained lines around his pale lips and that questioning shadow in his eyes.

I was awakened that night by a peculiar noise. In a moment I heard a whisper, followed by a dull thud. The room was dark as pitch, and I eased my head around and looked toward the double-window. Light pajamas showed vaguely against the dim light shining in from without. It was Sparrow, and for a moment I could not comprehend what he was doing. I thought he was walking in his sleep.

Then he whispered to himself, and I saw a gun snap across his chest and to his shoulder. He was practising the manual of arms at two o'clock in the morning. He had a blanket folded on the floor beneath him, so the gun would not make any noise.

For a moment I had to stifle my laughter, and then it did not seem so —— funny after all.

Finally—characteristic of Sparrow—he missed his hold and dropped his rifle. With a bound he was in bed, and he laid there quietly until I fell asleep. Next morning, when the bugle blew, the gun was back in its corner.

As I said, the squadron knew how Sparrow was working, and I believe that rumors of it must have reached the officers. At any rate, they finally eased up on him a little. The riding they gave him was now more humorous than contemptuous. He was a funny looking sight, at best: no uniform had been found anywhere near his size, and his khaki blouse and breeches flapped around his thin little form in grotesque folds. His deadly concentration on the field and in the class-room made him look like a rumpled, solemn owl.

The final touch to his reputation came in the matter of the band, and from that time on I think every one, including the officers, tried to help him. He was the laughing stock of the whole corps, due to his unending mistakes and peculiar appearance, but it was good-natured laughter, and he was really popular.

He could tease a guitar to death, and had the knack of singing songs of divers varieties with a certain crooning unction that the boys liked. Once in a great while he would perform for them, taking a few minutes off from his books. Gradually his eccentricities and efforts to make good became almost a legend with even the lower classes. After the band master he became the most prominent member of the corps.

This band was a cadet affair, the volunteers supplying their own instruments. Every last man wanted to play in it, because the band was relieved from formations and drill as a reward for their efforts. They led the corps on the march to meals, and played for the parade at retreat each night.

Sparrow tried to induce the bandmaster to let him play a guitar, mandolin or ukulele in the band, without success. Then he came to me and borrowed some money. This was not unnatural—I knew that he sent seventy-five dollars home to his mother every month, and his pay was only a hundred.

Two days later six hundred cadets, at rigid attention, were lined up to start for the regular daily review. Fifty or more cars held civilian spectators. The band, tooting their loudest, emerged from the near-by gymnasium and marched over to lead the corps to the parade ground. And bringing up the rear, taking stupendous steps with his short legs, chest out a mile and his uniform flapping in the breeze, strode Sparrow Morse, clanging away on a huge pair of cymbals for all he was worth.

A hundred cadets fought to keep their faces straight. The fat old bandmaster, in the lead, kept time fiercely, but his full-moon face was wreathed in a smile. The commandant and his staff took a look at the band, and the stiffly marching Morse, and their military gravity dissolved like magic. Every one there knew that Sparrow had bought the cymbals to break into the band, which was funny enough in itself, but the sight of it was even more impressive. From that day he was famous, and he had more time to give to his work.

SHORTLY before noon, on Friday of our fifth week, I came into the room and took Sparrow unawares. Every examination day was a crucial battle to him, and life was a —— on earth until Saturday, but I was unprepared for what I saw.

He was sitting on the bed, his head in his hands. I noticed his daily letter on the table, unopened.

He looked up in startled surprize, and his haunted eyes had tears in them. He tried to smile, and there was stark tragedy in the grimace on his face.

"I flunked wireless receiving today—motors too, I think," he said.

"Sure?" was all I could think of to say.

It was the first—and only—time I ever saw him beaten. The light was out of his eyes, and his spirit was numb.

He nodded.

"Not a living chance, in wireless. I lost a couple of letters, tried to catch up, went into a tail-spin, and —— knows how many I lost before I could get myself together."

"Let's hear your motor answers," I suggested, just for something to say.

He told me, without interest, and I figured that he had a bare chance to pass.

"It makes no difference," he said wearily. "Just a question of time, anyway."

He got up and walked toward the window, trying to whistle. He stood there, looking out on the campus.

"Don't take it so hard, Sparrow," I said. "Of course you've got your heart set on a commission and a pair of wings. We all have. But you're not beaten yet, and even if you don't make the grade it won't be anything to—er—break up a man's life or anything, you know. Ten years from now it won't mean a thing——"

He whirled like a flash, his face working.

"What the —— do you know about it?" he snarled.

He started pacing the floor. Finally he stopped in front of me, and smiled a wintry, crooked smile of apology.

"Excuse me, Jim, but you don't know a —— about this," he said.

For a moment he resumed pacing up and down, his head bent. His fists were clenched so tightly that the knuckles were white. Suddenly he turned to me, and his weirdly blazing eyes held mine as if by magnetic attraction.

"Do you know what I am?" he asked, and there was vicious self-contempt in his words. "I'm a dub. I'm the world's champion failure. All records for speed, control and distance in falling down on the job are held by Jethro Morse, Plymouth, Massachusetts. I'm not only an also-ran, but I'm a cinch to be one the rest of my life. Flyer! ——! Fine nerve I had, even thinking I could make the grade. I'm a natural born private in the rear rank, who couldn't make good as a corporal in a thousand years!"

I took him by the shoulder and threw him into a chair.

"Don't be a fool, Sparrow," I told him. "You're showing a yellow streak too big and wide for a pee-wee like you. A flunk in wireless that you aren't sure of——"

"Listen, Jim," he interrupted. "I can't blame you, but you don't know. I've been working since I was sixteen. I'm twenty-two now. I've held a dozen jobs—none of 'em any good—and been a failure at every one of 'em. I never got a raise in pay in my life. I've never been anything but Morse, the dub. I couldn't make a high school team, and I tried 'em all from debating to football. I couldn't make a good grade to save my life. I never got a decent salary in my life—and furthermore never earned the dinky pay I got. I've worked like I've worked here—and never got anywhere, because my work wasn't good enough."

He seemed to be taking a savage joy

in bawling himself out, and I let him go.

"I used to think I might do something if I got a chance, but I'm through thinking that. When a boss kept me around it was more through pity than anything else—I admit it. I've never been worth a —— at anything. Put me adding figures and I'll add 'em wrong. Put me addressing envelopes, or at some other important job, and I'll get things messed up. I never got a promotion. I never deserved one. But I've never been licked, until now. I'll settle down to be a clerk the rest of my life——"

He stood by the table, and suddenly the fire went out of him. His shoulders sagged, as he looked at those letters. They seemed to steady him, for a moment, and he took them in his hands absently. The irrepressible cockiness and struggling cheerfulness with which he had met misfortune were all gone. I was looking at a game little fighter who had absorbed punishment without losing his feet, but who was now reeling under the knock-out.

He sat down, and read his letter. Every day one came, addressed in a feminine hand, and every day he answered it. He read it now without interest, and threw it in the waste-basket. By that time I had reached a decision.

"Listen, Sparrow," I said. "If wireless is all you've flunked, and I think it is, I'll be a week ahead of you. I'll coach you along, and working the way you do it will be a cinch to get you through."

He gave me a long look from his humped-up position in the chair. His ridiculous uniform was in a thousand wrinkles—gaping at the neck, flapping over his wrists, gathering in folds at his knees. He looked like the caricature of a soldier, but there was nothing humorous in that strained face and those wistful eyes.

"Thanks, Jim," he said, and I was embarrassed as —— because his voice broke.

To break the tension I mentioned the fact that two years at the Academy had made the course there in ground-school easier as far as I was concerned, and for a moment he forgot himself in his surprize.

"How did you happen to leave?" he inquired.

"Mistook puppy-love for the real article, and figure I couldn't live unless I got married. The girl slipped me, thank——."

He got up and walked to the window again. The notes of assembly for the lunch formation drifted through the air, but he did not move. When he finally spoke, he did not turn around, but talked slowly with his back toward me.

"I suppose you think I'm crazy because I want to make the grade so badly," he said. "It's just this, Jim. I never have done anything worth while, as I said. This is my last chance, maybe, to get some—self-respect. Sometimes I think with an education I might have been in line for something I could do—but that's neither here nor there. I picked the Air Service because it was so hard to make, and because a flyer is sort of an individual—makes or breaks himself on his own skill. I figured it was my chance at—something big. As a matter of fact, to show you what a poor worm I am, I'm scared to death at the idea of flying. I'm not a grandstander, Jim, but I'd give the rest of my life to say that there was one —— time I'd made good.

"If I can take a ship up and fly —— out of it, I may be only a shavetail among colonels but I'll satisfy myself. Get me? Just to *be* a flyer will be something. See?"

I did.

The hours dragged interminably until Saturday noon, and Sparrow was really in bad shape. Failure in both subjects meant the ax.

Directly after the last class Saturday morning, white-faced, nervous men flocked to the bulletin board. Our own squadron had shrunk from a hundred and eleven men to fifty already—and there would be more that day. I told Sparrow to wait on the outskirts of the mob and let me find out his fate for him.

There were wild yells of joy from men who thought they had flunked and found they had come through all right, and here and there cadets with curiously strained faces lighted cigarets and tried to pretend they didn't care.

I found the list headed "Failures in Radio, Fifth Week," and scanned it three times. Morse's name was not there, and neither was it to be found on the motor list.

I let out a yell that split the heavens, and fought my way back through the surging mob of cadets. I totally forgot that I had not looked for my own name at all.

Sparrow was pacing up and down, puffing madly on an unlighted cigaret. He stopped when he saw me, and waited for the blow to fall.

"You're all right in both of 'em, Sparrow!" I yelped, and was surprized to hear my voice crack with excitement.

That snub-nosed, homely face of his went blank for a moment, and then became transfigured. He snapped back to normal in an instant, and leaped high in the air. A wild war-hoop cut through the dozens of hysterical celebrations. From the side-lines the ones who had failed tried to smile.

A dozen times he asked me if I was sure I was right, and then he went over to gloat over the lists which did not hold his name. The rest of the squadron smote him on the back and grinned their congratulation. It was a sight for the gods to see the cymbal player perform on the march to lunch that day.

The three remaining weeks went by like lightning. Day and night I worked with him. Many a time, after lights were out, we lay awake while I quizzed him on the work we had gone over that day. It was usually after midnight when we got to sleep, and reveille was at five.

I found out that he had a good grasp of theory and generalities, but he could not get his teeth into concrete detail. He could clearly and intelligently explain the theory of an internal-combustion motor, but ask him to explain or diagram the oiling system and he was lost. His mind fumbled concrete, specialized information the way his clumsy fingers messed the job of stripping and assembling a Lewis machine-gun.

Before long it seemed to me that I *was* Morse. My own examinations were merely a matter of form. When I looked over the questions I did so with Morse in mind, and I was nervous when he recited. I looked at the weekly lists for Morse's name, and not my own. He was a living flame of energy, and he consumed my own individuality in his. He fought his studies furiously, as if beating down physical opponents. His face became thinner, and he was as taut as a bowstring.

I was cadet colonel of the corps during my last week—on account of my previous military experience, I presume—and after the last examination I was called down to headquarters and informed that I was to take the squadron down to Donovan Field, Texas, for their flying training.

The news meant little to me just then. I hurried back to the quarters to see how Sparrow felt about that last battle. I knew he should have passed all right, but still I was relieved to find him bright-eyed and chipper.

"I got by, Jim," he told me. "Where do we go from here?"

"Congratulations, Sparrow. Five days' leave, and then to Donovan Field."

"Some trip for a guy who never had been out of Massachusetts in his life until he joined the Air Service!" grinned Sparrow.

He looked at me half-fearfully, started to say something, and then stopped. Finally he said—

"You haven't anywhere in particular to spend your leave, have you?"

"No—I'll go into New York and see some shows, I suppose," I told him.

"I was wondering whether you'd like to come up around Boston and spend it with me," he said shyly. "I'd like to have you know my mother."

"Why, yes, I'd be delighted," I said, and no one could have been more surprized at my answer than I was myself.

ON THE train over to Boston, while we were talking about the eight crowded weeks behind us, I happened to remark:

"Well, Sparrow, I suppose you're feeling a lot better now that you've finished the first lap. They say the first eight weeks are the hardest for a cadet."

He grinned cheerfully.

"Of course I'm tickled pink, but it doesn't mean anything except that I've still got a chance," he said. "Did I go down there, stand on my own two feet, and smash through under my own power? You're —— right I didn't. You pulled me through. So far as Jethro Morse, in person, is concerned, he'd have been kicked out of there because he couldn't stand the gaff. And that's that."

Apparently Sparrow never tried to fool himself.

His mother lived in a little white cottage looking out over the sea. I had never been in that historical little town on Cape Cod, and I was interested in it entirely aside from the famous rock. The quiet street and old-fashioned houses prepared me for Sparrow's domicile, and his mother was in perfect keeping with her surroundings. She was a tiny gray-haired old lady with eyes as bright as her son's and a pert, spry way about her that reminded me of a bird.

In the little cottage I found horsehair furniture, a parlor that was never opened, an old tin bath-tub, and a mess of bric-à-brac, sea-shells, hideous oil-paintings and many things smacking of the sea. I learned that Sparrow's dead father had been captain of a fishing schooner toward the end of his career, and that when younger he had been master of a whaler.

Mrs. Morse was a wonderful cook, and I'll never forget the meals I had at her table. Home-baked biscuits, and such pies and pickles and things as she set forth were—still are—rare things in my gastronomic career.

The attitude of mother and son toward each other was curiously pathetic, although there was something in it which made a homeless wanderer like myself muse, some times, about all that I had missed because I had never known my own folks.

The love between them was shown plainly, Sparrow in particular waiting hand and foot on his mother. She was bound up in him—it was easy to see that. And yet in her eyes there was the yearning of a mother over a son whom she could not quite understand, and with whose tribulations she sympathized to such an extent that she actually shared his own bitter struggle. I sensed the fact that she realized perfectly the bitter road he had traveled, loved him the more for it, and yet could not quite understand.

I met a large number of his friends, male and female. He seemed to be popular—his unquenchable spirits guaranteed that—but the men were somewhat patronizing, without meaning to be so, and the girls treated him more like a beloved freak than a marriageable man. I say marriageable man because it is my impression, out of a very small and never intimate acquaintance with nice girls, that they all, more or less, consider all men as their fair prey.

There was nothing flirtatious, or smacking of sex, in their bearing toward him. He was just Sparrow, that's all. They laughed at him and with him, seemed somewhat puzzled because he was actually a flying cadet, and treated it more or less as a joke.

I thoroughly enjoyed the few days there on the coast of Massachusetts, but after all I was glad when we pointed our noses south and started sniffing the breezes that blew from Donovan Field.

WE STARTED from Princeton for St. Louis one night, and late in the afternoon of the next day we were three hundred miles west on our way toward Texas by way of Missouri. Twenty-nine of the hundred and eleven men who had come to ground school with Sparrow and me were on the special car. I had the stateroom and Sparrow and I shared it.

We were talking of our recent visit to the stern and rockbound coast of New England, and I remarked idly:

"You didn't seem to have any particular damsel picked out, Sparrow? What's the matter with you? There were some luscious morsels——"

"What business have I got to think about girls until I amount to something?" he interrupted me. "I've got my hands full satisfying myself before I attempt to convince any woman that I'm anything but a bunch of bologna. If I proposed to one she'd think it was the joke of the season!"

His tone was humorous, but I sensed bitterness—a note of self-contempt and wistful longing—which were unmistakable. After all, the normal man desires to appear well before the other sex. If they claim they don't, they're liars or lunatics, or both.

Out in the car the boys were singing, chattering, playing cards. With the continuous strain of ground school behind them, and flying itself in the near future, they were making the trip a continuous lark.

Sparrow lighted a cigaret and stared out at the close-lying West Virginia mountains we were passing.

"I've always thought that a girl having money, and the man having none, should be no obstacle," he went on. "In fact, I only know one obstacle which ought to stand in the way of any man's making a try for any girl in the world, from the Queen of Keokuk to a ten-cent-store gum-chewer.

"What's that?" I inquired.

"A man has no right to propose to a woman unless he's proven that he can keep afloat in life!" he stated vigorously. "If he hasn't his own respect as a man among men, he oughtn't to drag any woman in it!"

"Think becoming an aviator would cause you to cease this womanless existence and strike out in the feminine sea, daring the breakers and storms and rocks and shoals——"

"Not exactly," he grinned.

"Every time I read one of these yarns where the girl sends the man out to win the tennis championship, or kill the villain, or gracefully accomplish some other praiseworthy deed for the good of her pocketbook, the satisfaction of her vanity, and the glory of God before she can marry him, I always wonder at the dumbness of our sex," I observed weightily. "If a girl requires that a man bring home a certain strip of bacon before she can marry him she isn't in love with him, and he's a common ordinary sucker, which most men in love are. If she loves him she won't require anything in particular, except that he be able to keep them both from starving to death, maybe. I——"

"That's got nothing to do with me!" he broke in. "I don't know what a girl would think of me, but I do know —— well that I haven't any desire to do more than creep around the outskirts of Womanville until I prove to *myself* that I can *do* something! —— it, I know I'm a dub—why should any girl want to bother with me?"

The swift passion in his words surprized me, and made me sorry I had opened the discussion. I could see plainly how hard it must be for a man with normal social instincts to stunt his life in that direction because of his self-consciousness. Sparrow actually felt unfit, I believe, to take his place in that side of life, and I glimpsed barren years of self-denial, while he fought his never-ending battle.

He got to his feet, and took a few paces up and down the corridor outside the stateroom. I said nothing, for the good reason that I could think of nothing to say.

"Give us a tune, Sparrow!" yelled somebody.

Sparrow straightened up, and the old grin appeared on his face. In a moment, to the strumming of a ukelele, he was singing one of his favorite tunes: a rollicking ditty that made it hard to believe that Sparrow had anything on his mind but his hair.

I was born at least ten thousand years ago;
There is nothing in this world that I don't know;
I saw Peter, Paul and Moses, play ring-around-the-roses
And I'll whang the man that says it isn't so!

AT ST. LOUIS our car was attached to the Texas Special, and we started on the last lap of our trip to San Antonio. A few minutes after we had started Sparrow was leading an extemporaneous chorus which had memorized his song, and they were going full swing on the second verse—

Queen Victoria and I were married secretly;
And we spent two happy weeks in Milwaukee;
But I finally turned and shook her, to join with General Hooker,
For to drive the fighting Yanks from Tennessee.

Silence fell so suddenly that it was a shock. Then a sharp—

"Attention!"

"Rest!" said some one. "Where's the commander-in-chief?"

I came out in the car, and shook hands with a tall, lanky, sardonic bird in uniform, who introduced himself as First Lieutenant George Groody of the Air Service.

"I was due back from leave and they wired me to get on this train and chaperone you," he told me in the stateroom.

We talked along casually, and I finally learned that he had already spent two years in the French Air Service, and had come back to America to be commissioned in the American flying corps because he wanted to "snoot about the old sod a bit," as he expressed it.

"Don't let the bunch know it, or they'll talk me to death," he remarked.

He took care to stay in the stateroom most of the time, but Sparrow got hold of him and asked a continuous string of questions. I could see that he was still leery of flying, wondering whether he could stand the gaff. Groody, his hawk-like face showing a certain perverse mockery that I later learned to be characteristic of him, stood it as long as he could and then chased him out and commanded him to sing.

I enjoyed talking to Groody. I found out that he had been in Shanghai in 1914, where I had been myself at the time and before long we were swapping reminiscences of the Bund and the Foochow Road. We were all acquainted by the time we reached San Antonio next evening.

Trucks met us, and we were taken out to the biggest aviation field in the world. As we entered it we could see two lines of white buildings stretching away into the darkness, and it seemed as if the field itself extended to the end of the world.

Once again our names put Morse and I together—our bunks in the cadet barracks were side by side, and we were assigned to the same instructor for flying.

I shall never forget that first morning.

It was shortly after dawn, and we stood and shivered on the line while our unaccustomed ears rang with the roar of a hundred motors warming up. A hundred ships pressed against the wheel-blocks as mechanics handled the throttles. The twenty-six tremendous white hangars made a line over a mile long, edging the flat, mile-square field. Separated from the main airdrome by a road and a line of barracks was Field Two, a half-mile square.

The exhaust-pipes threw long streamers of blue and yellow flame through the chill half-light, and lounging instructors in helmets seemed true denizens of the upper air. Busy mechanics worked on the ships, and waiting cadets tried to keep themselves warm.

Soon the field seemed half-covered by scudding ships that roared across it and gracefully took the air. They disappeared in various directions: Some to the outlying fields where advanced flying was taught, some to Field One, which was the headquarters of the acrobatic stage, and others on cross-country trips which were a part of every cadet's training.

Then the dual-control ships took the air. Thirty or more of them droned around the field, coming down to land each time around. Instructors sat impassively in the front seats, allowing their green cadets to land. Ships bounced and skidded around the field, and a dozen times I could see instructors save their cadets from bad wrecks, acting at the last moment. Occasionally a ship would swoop down across the hangars and I could see the instructor holding his hands in the air—the signal that everything was strictly up to the man in the back seat.

Two or three officers stood out in the center of the field. That meant that their cadets were soloing for the first time.

That first day showed me that Sparrow's fear of the air had out-lasted the actual experience of one flight, at least. Our introduction to the air came in the form of a joy-ride, when we were not expected to take the stick.

Our instructor was a red-headed, sharp-featured, nasty-tongued chap named Rawlins. He looked and acted like a bundle of nerves. My own first trip is rather vague in my mind: The roar of the motor filled the universe, and as we took the air it seemed that the earth receded from us. There was a sensation of terrific speed at first, which disappeared as we got higher.

The ship seemed to buck and quiver like an unbroken bronco, and as Rawlins banked for his turns my belt felt all too frail. The slightest dive generated a queer sensation in the pit of my stomach, and I looked down at the earth very little. When I did, I was relieved to find that the altitude did not bother me. The hangars were like small patches on the ground, and the ships on the pocket-handkerchief field were tiny insects crawling on its surface.

Above all, though, was the thrill of freedom. The ship dived and zoomed and banked with an effect of utter ease and power that was like nothing else I can conceive of. The fastest automobile would be stodgy and stiff in comparison. Even now, when flying has lost its kick for me, the memory of that first wild thrill is as real as if it came but yesterday.

Sparrow followed me. I will not deny that the ground seemed pleasantly solid to me, but I threw a word of encouragement to the determinedly smiling Morse.

"It's wonderful!" I told him.

When he came down he could barely walk. His face was a sickly green, and there were unmistakable evidences that he had been sick. Nevertheless, he essayed a grin and nonchalantly tried to smoke a cigaret. He sat on the bench for a while, saying nothing, and not even noticing the landings or the ships in the air. At first he made no answer to the gibes of the others, but finally he described his flight and razzed himself unmercifully.

"I'm just as comfortable in a ship as I would be riding Niagara Falls in a dishpan," he told me.

Real instruction for us started next day, and wicked work it was. Rawlins had no patience whatever, and his tongue had been whittled to a point. I took some things from him that would have called for a licking under any other circumstances, and what I got was not a patch on what Sparrow had to stand for.

When he was up we would all watch the ship. Invariably the landing would be a series of graceful leaps and bounds. Then it would stand quietly, for several momentous minutes. We knew what that meant—that Rawlins was airing his vocabulary. Sparrow would come in, grinning an indomitable grin, and imitate Rawlins in his more heated periods.

"I can't blame him—every time we come down he takes his life right in his hands," Sparrow admitted one day.

It seemed that he simply could not get the feel of the ship. I soloed in a little over four hours, but Sparrow was still a hopeless dub. He was unable to sense that instant of hovering when the stick must come back if a three-point landing is to be made, and half the time he could not seem to locate the ground. He would level off ten feet in the air, and hold the ship there. At the last moment Rawlins would dive for the controls, and get the ship to earth safely. Then the instructor would take a trip up in the air all by himself, and verbally hit the ceiling.

After soloing I was transferred to the first solo field. When I departed I firmly believed that Sparrow would never get off the dual-control stage.

Sure enough, the blow fell two days later. When we gathered in the barracks he tried to carry off the situation without breaking down.

"Rawlins is recommending me for discharge," he said, and attempted to be casual.

The little group of cadets who had fought the battle of Princeton with us gathered around, and tried to express their sympathy. Some of the older men were there, and they were silent when he told the news. Every cadet lived in the perpetual shadow that had overwhelmed Sparrow, and to them it was not a thing to be taken lightly.

"Just missed my vocation, fellow-slaves," he told them airily. "I'm a natural born kiwi—that noted Australian bird that has wings but can't fly. I'm a crippled sparrow, not an eagle. I'll make a much better private in the quartermaster corps than I would an officer in the Air Service. This air business isn't such a much, any way. You can't get a bit of insurance outside of the Government brand, and why should one as young and beautiful as I want to die without insurance? Rawlins says I get sick so often I'd starve to death anyway, even if I escaped being picked up with a blotter."

His face was set in a strained grin, but he didn't fool any one. The older men—those who had reached the dizzy eminence of the acrobatic stage, or formation—made awkwardly sympathetic remarks about how tough the first stage was and how close to being busted they had come, but Sparrow would have none of their consolation.

"It isn't —— on me at all," he contradicted. "I'm not getting any raw deal from that red-headed spitfire Rawlins. I can't fly any more than a turtle. I've —— near killed him three times——"

I went out while he was still talking. It was just as it had been in ground school—I felt that the blow had fallen on me. I couldn't stand by and watch Sparrow play his part, because I knew too well the despair he was trying to hide. In more or less of a daze I walked up the road and turned into Groody's quarters.

It was a warm day, for January, and I found the door open and Groody draped on a couch in the front room, smoking the inevitable long, thin cigar and reading Schopenhauer.

I saluted in the doorway, and he waved the cigar at me.

"Hello Morton. Come in."

"Thank you, sir," I replied, and he grinned sardonically.

"Oh, cut out the formality," he growled. "I'm so —— sick of saluting and getting 'sirred' by scared cadets that I'd like to have 'em say, one time, what they really want to say when they see a pair of bars approaching. Something like, 'Here comes another one of those ——!' "

I laughed, and accepted one of his cigars. Then I told him about Sparrow. Groody was a dual instructor at the time, and under the circumstances I'd have bearded the C. O. himself in his den.

"I can see what you're getting at," he told me bruskly. "He's undoubtedly just a dub—couldn't fly a kite if his life depended on it, and you want me to wrestle in prayer—or rather wrestle in the air—with him. Being a —— fool myself, and because I sort of like the cocky little runt, I'll do it. Wouldn't do it if I wasn't a fool—any man who picks the Air Service is either a fool or an idiot. Let's have a drink."

Which we did, and forgot Sparrow for a time in favor of tequila cocktails. Before I left he was calling me Jim and I guess I was calling him George.

I found Sparrow writing a letter. That is, the paper was spread before him, but he was looking out the window, and he was off-guard. His wide mouth was thin and straight, and his eyes seemed to be gazing dully into a hopeless future.

I told him my news briefly:

"You'll be in Groody's squad, and he thinks he can teach you to fly. He says he can fix it up with the C. O. to give you another chance."

"Huh?" barked Sparrow.

I went into detail, and before I had finished Sparrow was doing a clog-dance all over the little room. Then he tore off into the barracks to tell the bunch, and the next minute loud cheers arose. A few minutes later—just a kid—he was strumming away on "Dink" Gerard's guitar and the whole barracks was listening to him sing a "blues" song that was a favorite of his. The first line ran something like this—

Oh, the woman I love, has got one gold tooth and
one long black w-a-a-a-vy hair!

When I came in there were a dozen men grouped around him, and his own happiness seemed to extend to them. The cadets were always a close corporation fighting the rest of the world—even mechanics took a shot at them—and in Sparrow's case this feeling was intensified.

He was one of the most popular men among the six hundred cadets already, but in addition there was something in his personality, aided by his small stature, which led the bunch to think of him as a sort of mascot—a youngster in whose efforts they were all interested.

A week later, when I had progressed from the first to the second solo stage, I met Groody on his way to supper. He stopped me, removed the cigar from his mouth, pushed his Stetson a little farther to one side of his head, and spoke as follows:

"That little mick couldn't fly in a thousand years. Nevertheless if he wants to kill himself, far be it from me to interfere in such a praiseworthy undertaking. I'm soloing him tomorrow, regardless, and God help his soul! I feel like a murderer, and you're an accessory before the fact."

He stalked on his way, giving me no chance to reply. I got permission to be absent from my stage for the morning, and without saying anything to Sparrow lounged around the dual stage waiting for the great event to happen.

I saw Groody take him up, and five minutes later spotted the ship landing. It bounced once. If that was Sparrow, the landing was unusually good. Then Groody got out, and sent him on his way.

There were at least twenty other ships making the rounds, and some of them were manned by cadets who were making their first solo trips.

As I watched him take off I was as nervous as a man can be, and not go crazy. If there had been a million dollars at stake, or my own future, I could not have watched that Jenny drift around the field with any closer attention. Every time a bump hit it my heart missed a beat, and I'm not a susceptible man.

His first landing was long drawn out agony. He hit wheels first, bounced ten feet in the air, gave it the gun, bounced again, and finally left the motor on and flew around to try it again. This time his dive was terrifically fast, and I could see by the propeller that the motor was full on. He tried to land a ship going ninety miles an hour, and naturally, when he pulled back on the stick, the ship zoomed. It went up and up until I was sure he would stall it, but he leveled out in time.

When the same thing happened three times in succession I knew that something had gone wrong with the throttle mechanism, and that the motor would not cut down to idling. There was but one thing for Sparrow to do—cut the switch and turn the motor off entirely. Naturally, however, being Sparrow Morse, he never thought of that.

Around and around he went, diving like a bullet, flashing across the field, and then up again. Time and time again he missed other ships by a hair, until finally every other Jenny on the airdrome was brought in to the line and Sparrow had the air to himself.

I shall never forget Groody, standing out there in the field, chewing a cigar and making motions at Sparrow. He was trying to convey to his pupil the idea that the switch must be cut, and he turned himself into an acrobat to do it. Sparrow would swoop down and shoot past him, head over the side, and nod as if to tell Groody that everything was all right. Twice Groody had to flop to the ground because Sparrow came so close to him, and finally he sought the line.

By this time every soul on Donovan Field was out to watch the performance. The crowd was one broad grin. Sparrow missed water-towers, hangar-roofs, and ships on the line by margins which kept us on the verge of lunacy. The ship reeled through the air like a huge and slightly inebriate dragon-fly.

The broad expanse of Field Two was occupied by but one thing—a mowing-machine in charge of a phlegmatic Mexican who was accustomed to having ships swarm about him like flies. He had the most dangerous job in either France or America.

Finally Sparrow's gas ran out. The crowd tensed as the first warning sputter reached our ears. A thousand onlookers waited silently for whatever might happen as Sparrow nosed over for his first solo landing. A dead motor made it a certainty that he would land some way—either whole or in parts.

As I have mentioned, Donovan Field is more than a mile square and that crawling mowing-machine was the only thing on it. Sparrow pointed directly toward it, barely missed the driver, and hit one of the mules with his landing gear. The flyer's gods saw to it that he did not break a wheel in the process, and presided over an additional miracle whereby Sparrow made a perfect landing. The laugh that arose from the packed line merged into a hilarious cheer that continued during the whole time Sparrow taxied in. He was laughing, too, but he was shaky on his feet and there was a beaten look in his eyes.

I guess Groody was responsible again for the fact that Sparrow was not discharged. The mule had been killed, and the thing was too much of a joke for even the C. O. to take seriously.

Groody was ordered overseas three days later, but it turned out that Sparrow could get along without his help from then on. I am certain that his arduous journey through the various stages was successful because the instructors laughed at and liked the eager, indomitable kid who tried so hard and accomplished so little.

Every possible mistake, short of cracking up a ship, was in the pilot book of Cadet Sparrow Morse. He was the field clown. Not a day passed without its quota of laughs from his flying; he got on the wrong eight courses and chased other ships off, failed to notice a change in the wind and landed the wrong way, and in general pulled every bone in the calendar. He would join in the laughter at his own expense, jeer at himself as no one else did, and then draw himself tauter than ever and try with grimmer determination.

Scarcely a day passed without some cadet being discharged, or killed, but when I finally got my commission and was ordered to Hoboken Sparrow was still hanging on by the skin of his teeth and the kindness of his instructors.

I HUNG around Hoboken for a month, waiting for orders. I got this letter from Sparrow the week before I sailed:

> Dear Jim:
>
> Am on acrobatics now, and if my stomach holds out my commission looks like a possibility for the first time. I've been up for discharge twice but they didn't can me. I got off course on the cross-country stage, on a trip to Seguin. I was absolutely lost, just milling around, and at the end of two hours I looked down by chance and there was a field with a T in it on the edge of a town. Landed, and it was the field I was supposed to land on, and the town was Seguin. It might have been Haverhill, Massachusetts, for all I knew. On account of the time I took to get there they got wise to me, and 'Chin-strap' Charley Addison, —— him, tried to make 'em discharge me. If he wasn't so unpopular with every other flyer I guess they would have done it.
>
> I'm a lousy flyer, Jim. I haven't made a good landing since you left and Whitney, who has the acrobatic stage now, told me I did more stunts trying to fly straight than I did when I was trying to do acrobatics.
>
> Hold back the boche till I come, and the first time you meet Johnny Pershing tell him not to sign any armistice until I arrive. As always, Sparrow.

I WENT through the advanced training at Issoudun, and there I found George Groody enthroned as chief combat-instructor. He had blossomed into the best pilot in France, bar none. Any man who ever was at Issoudun will remember him—the long, lanky, sardonic chap with a dry cigar in his mouth who day after day, in his little Nieuport, rode the ships of his pupils right down to the ground. For utter wizardry in the air, he held the palm, and I have seen most of the good ones fly. I also learned, for the first time, that he had credit for seven planes while with the French.

I went up to the front with the 313th pursuit squadron, and was lucky enough to knock down a few Boche. Promotions were being handed out rapidly, and before I knew it I was a major. When the Richtofen circus got Major Roth, I became C. O. of the 313th, in August of 1918. One week later I got word that George Groody, now a captain, was joining us, and the following day he arrived in person.

"It's taken me all this time to pry loose from being a school-teacher," he told me. "Thank —— I'm where the fun is, now. I'm glad I didn't high-tone you when you were a raggedy-backed cadet at Donovan. Can I hornswoggle your eminence out of a good job?"

I made him a flight commander, pronto, and he proceeded to go out and ruin four Germans in the next week. He was in the office one morning when a letter was delivered to me which was addressed in a familiar scrawl. It was the chirography of Sparrow Morse, and had been mailed in Paris. I read it aloud to Groody:

> "Dear Jim:
>
> "I'm side-tracked here in Paris, intrusted with a desk job that could be handled by the dumbest stenographer that ever breathed. I thought when I was hanging around Donovan as a —— recreation officer I'd hit the bottom, but not so.
>
> "Is there any way under heaven you can get me up to the front? I hate to ask, and I can't conceive of any squadron that would want me, but I have a special reason for bothering you.
>
> "I go around all day waiting for somebody to mention you or Groody, and when they do I start the 'I knew them when,' stuff. Reflected glory is better than none, I guess. As always, Sparrow."

"What do you think?" I asked Groody.

"You'd be signing his death warrant, unless he's done a double form-flip," stated Groody.

That was exactly what I thought, and yet in my heart I knew I'd try to do what he asked. To justify myself to Groody, I told him everything I knew about Sparrow, holding nothing back. Groody smoked and listened, and finally said:

"He's a complete idiot, but I admire his idiocy, at that. Do you know, Jim, that the little cuss was afraid of the air right up to the last minute? Shouldn't be surprized if he still was. Nothing against him—but it takes nerve every time he goes up, unless I'm badly mistaken, and I'll bet he sweats blood even thinking about the front."

"And yet he'd give his immortal soul to get here," I told him.

I went right to headquarters, put in a strong request and lied as a flyer should for his comrades, and within a month Sparrow rolled in. I was alone in the office when I heard his voice behind me, and the next minute he was pumping my arm while those shining blue eyes of his sparkled into mine.

He had changed quite a bit, and for the moment I was puzzled to account for it. Then I saw that it narrowed down to a matter of clothes, largely. Instead of oversized, flapping breeches and a yawning neck-band and ungainly shoes he was arrayed in a perfectly tailored uniform that fitted like a glove.

His tiny feet and legs were encased in custom-made boots, and his Sam Browne belt, boots and the peak of his cap were shined to the nth degree. When he took off his cap I saw that he had let his hair grow long, and instead of that spiky, ragged brush-pompadour it was slicked down neatly. His homely, snub-nosed face was good to see, and I was glad that he was there.

"How is your mother?" I asked, after greetings were over.

"Mother died of pneumonia two weeks after I got my commission," he told me. "I was there—and I'm glad she saw me as an officer, Jim."

Somehow I could scarcely believe that that active little old lady had given up her lease on the life she seemed to love so well. I expressed my sympathy as well as I could, which was not very well and finally we talked about the Gardners. Sparrow began to walk up and down my coop of an office with his ridiculous little strides.

"Jim, I want to tell you why I'm still bothering you," he said finally. "I had to put my pride in my pocket, Jim—had to! Same old story. But Jim, you know me—and the way I feel. I'm supposed to be a flyer—but wearing the bars hasn't changed things. Now I'm going to shoot the works. I'm going back to America as somebody—or I'm not going back. I'd rather be a corpse than a dub!"

He took a few paces in silence after this outburst, and then his grim face dissolved in the well-known Morse grin.

"Listen to the runt talking himself into a hero!" he jeered. "I hope I gave you a laugh, at any rate. Hello, Groody!"

George came stalking in, and shook Sparrow's hand solemnly.

"Hello, you double-died idiot," he said conversationally. "Come on out with me and I'll show you where the ignition-switch is on an S.E.5. We're shy of gas, and——"

"You'll probably be shy of ships after I've been here a while," grinned Sparrow. "I'm one of the leading German aces now. The only man I can think of who's crashed more American ships than I is Richtofen, and I'll overtake him in a week."

Before the afternoon was over Sparrow knew every man in the outfit and was one of the boys. That night Groody and I took him over to Nancy, and of course he went to the Liegouse Café for dinner. I explained the little Air Service ceremony that took place there every night, and Sparrow's eyes commenced to shine with anticipation.

We had a few drinks, and I was interested to see the effect on him. That unconquerable spirit of his was always obvious in his eyes, but, perhaps because I knew him so well, I always thought I could detect the wistful, inarticulate sense of futility and defeat which seemed to be just beneath the bright mask he wore. The stimulus of the liquor, though, apparently gave him the illusion of achievement. I can't quite define the reason for my judgment, but Sparrow, when drinking, seemed to feel himself a man among men, capable of doing his share.

Every allied flyer who could make it came to the Liegouse for dinner, and before any one ate, the highest-ranking man present conducted a little ceremony. A representative of each nation read the list of flyers who were missing that day, and then the impromptu chairman—never lower-ranking than a general—gave the toast—

"The shifting sands of the hour glass
Measures swift time as it flies;
Here's to the men gone west today
And here's to the next man who dies!"

The toast was taken standing, and then the café burst into gaiety again. Sparrow breathed deeply as it ended, and I could see that the atmosphere and the spirit of the thing had gripped him.

Every one present, practically, knew everybody else, and the environment was by no means cool nor conventional. In a few minutes Sparrow went to the piano, and began hammering out the jazziest jazz I ever listened to. That boy could manipulate almost any musical instrument to the queen's taste.

The French girls went crazy about the music, and before any one knew quite what had happened tables were pushed back and the whole crowd was swaying deliriously to the satanic, inspired music which flowed from Sparrow's fingers.

Our squadron schedule was one day on duty, one day on the alert, and the third day off, and each third day found the three of us at the Liegouse. Within a week Sparrow would be greeted by a shout of welcome, and he was the pet of the place. The French girls liked "the cute American," but Sparrow never gave them a tumble. He laughed and kidded and played for the others and never went further. None of my names is Galahad, but somehow I appreciated his attitude.

I prevented his going over the lines as long as I could, but finally I had to yield. There really was a shortage of ships, so I had a legitimate excuse to make him wait for his training on an S.E.5 scout. Finally I had a ship for him, and I kept him practising for a week. Two near crack-ups were climaxed by a real one. He landed at about a hundred miles an hour, and ran into a truck. He came crawling out of the heap of linen and metal which was his ship, and that quotation about "a head bloody but unbowed" might have been written for him.

Something in the grim, set determination with which he attacked the job of perfecting his flying made me agree with Groody's judgment—that Sparrow was afraid of the air. He drove himself to it, however, and his incessant pleas to go over the lines became embarrassing. Finally, when I could no longer stall him off without breaking his heart, I gave him his opportunity.

It was as safe as I could make it—a seven-ship patrol at dawn. In ordinary circumstances Sparrow would have been as safe over the lines as a crippled rabbit in a lion's den, but in this formation I figured he would be reasonably sure of coming back. Groody and Roj Berwick, both aces, were in it, and I led it myself. The other three men were dependable veterans.

The ground mist blanketed the earth when we took off, and the air was cool and smooth. Great mounds of mist hung in the sky as our S.E.5's, in V formation, hummed over No Man's Land and across the German lines. Sparrow was flying Number 3, second ship in the left wing of the V, and he overcontrolled a good deal, throwing the ship behind him out of formation frequently.

Suddenly a flock of Fokkers poured out from behind a cloud. They were above us, and the ships were black with red noses. It was the Von Krutoffen circus, and, with the exception of a few outfits like Richtofen's and Wolff's, the boches did not come in any more deadly combinations.

In a second we were in the midst of as fine a dog-fight as a man ever looked at. It seemed that ships swarmed like flies in the air. It was every man for himself—nine Fokkers against seven S.E.5's, and every machine-gun spitting death.

For the next two minutes I was climbing, diving, turning, shooting. Sparrow's ship was number 3, and it seemed to me that I could see it everywhere I looked. It was never right-side up—he was tumbling all over the sky.

For some reason I always swore continuously and blasphemously in a scrap, and I can remember condemning Sparrow to the uttermost depths because he was always in the way. Right in the center of that fight he was staggering hither and yon—falling, side-slipping, butting around. The only other definite thing I remember was Roj Berwick fighting von Krutoffen himself off to one side—Von Krutoffen's ship was pure black, without any red on it, and easily distinguished. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the famous German go spinning downward, and gave vent to a hoarse cheer which no one, including myself, could hear.

I zoomed up underneath a Fokker to take a shot at it while it hung stalled in the sky, and at that moment a ship fell past me, so close that it nearly hit me. It was fluttering down on its back, out of control, and the numeral on the side was a 3. As I pressed my machine-gun control I knew that Sparrow had lost his last fight.

I went berserk for a few seconds, and flung my ship around like a mad man. Finally I came to myself, with the Fokkers in full retreat. Two of them had been knocked down, and another was badly crippled, flying wing-down through the cloudy sky. We let the lame duck go, and my eyes sought the pitted ground to find Sparrow. There was an S.E.5 in flames down there.

I headed back for our lines, and my six ships drew into formation. I looked around, and never shall forget as long as I live how a big 3 hit me in the eye. With his head just above the side of the cockpit Sparrow grinned at me, and we were so close that I could see how white his face was. I checked up as we droned along, and found that the Fokkers had potted George Hyman. Most of our ships were full of bullet holes, and Harry Thurston was wounded, but we got back all right. As soon as our ships were on the line I asked Sparrow what had happened.

"My machine-gun jammed!" he told me, his eyes still blazing in his strained face.

"But I saw you falling upside down——"

"I was trying to correct the jam, and the ship got away from me."

"When did it jam on you?" inquired Groody, lighting the inevitable cigar.

"Why—er—the first burst," faltered Sparrow.

Groody's eyes narrowed, until they were mere lines of light in his thin, mocking face.

"Then what the —— did you stay in the middle of that mess for? Why didn't you get away?"

"I—wanted to stick around so that when the gun got working——"

"Did it get working?" I asked him.

He shook his head. Sparrow had stayed in there, as helpless as a cheeping chick at a hawk convention.

Groody and I took a look at Sparrow's machine-guns. Five shots had been fired before the jam. We examined the ammunition-belt, where it fed into the gun itself, and Groody grinned that saturine grin of his.

"Anybody else in the world would have had that jam corrected in about three seconds," he stated, and it was the truth.

I sat down and wrote a recommendation that Sparrow be awarded the D.S.C. I didn't tell him what I had done, because I was not at all sure that it would go through.

For three days he flew from four to seven hours a day, trying his best to learn to handle an S.E.5 with more skill and to use his guns properly. Then his C. C. tripping-gear went bad on him, he shot off his propeller on the machine-gun range, and crashed his propellerless ship in landing. He was in bed a week, hobbled around with a cane for another week, and was limping for still a third, which prevented him from flying and relieved my mind tremendously. Toward the end of the third week Groody and I hauled him up to Nancy in the afternoon, and a French general gave him a kiss for each cheek and a Croix de Guerre with one palm to wear on his blouse. Sparrow was thunderstruck, and seemed more dazed than anything else at the cheers of the laughing crowd. He was well-known around Nancy.

That night at the Liegouse I noticed he was not wearing either the medal or the ribbon.

"I'll wait till I earn one—if I wasn't a butter-fingered kiwi I'd have been in that fight doing something instead of floundering all over the ozone in everybody else's way," he said shortly, and then got drunk as a hoot-owl, played the paino for two hours, and seemed to be having a wonderful time.

A few days later he went over the lines again, in a five ship formation. It was a foggy evening, and he did not return with the rest. He had lost the formation in a fog, Roj Berwick told me, and they could not find him.

When the next day passed without any news from him Groody and I went into Nancy in an attempt to drown our memories of him. As we entered the Liegouse there was a shout of inquiry for Sparrow. The word spread quickly that he was missing, and his name was on the American list. There were many wet eyes in the place when we drank, "to the men gone west today," and my own vision was somewhat uncertain.

However, he was still on deck. When Groody and I dragged our aching heads into the airdrome next morning the sentinel gave us the news with a face that was beaming like a full moon.

"Telephone call from group-headquarters, sir. Lieutenant Morse is alive!"

In answer to our questions he told us what he knew, and in the office was a memorandum telling the rest. A German flyer had dropped a note saying that Sparrow had landed on a German airdrome, thinking he was behind his own lines and was shooting for an American field. He had cracked up and broken his leg. He was now a prisoner, and was having good care, according to the note.

Groody and I laughed almost hysterically for ten minutes. Our relief was so great that the colossal bone Sparrow had been guilty of seemed funnier than it was.

"Well, he's safe for the rest of this —— war, anyway," Groody remarked finally. "Why in —— did he admit he was lost to 'em? Why didn't he say he'd had a forced landing or something——"

"That's Sparrow Morse, himself—he doesn't stoop to kid even himself," I told him.

Everybody in the Air Service knew or had heard of Sparrow, and the laugh went up and down the Allied lines. The story increased with retelling, naturally. But I was wondering how he felt over there in Germany, and I was afraid that he was eating his heart out. I hoped with all my heart that this final debacle would not quench the spark of self-confidence in him forever, and that he would not emerge a beaten man.

The armistice was signed two weeks later, and I was among the first to be ordered home. Groody was in a hospital, badly wounded, and I hadn't the slightest idea where Sparrow was, but I had no choice except to obey orders.

WHEN I landed in New York I found orders to San Diego awaiting me. It took me several hours to decide against applying for leave at once. I wanted to go to Boston, and the thought of doing so had bothered me all the way from France. I did not go, however. Cowardice perhaps, is a virtue under certain circumstances.

I took two months' leave from Rockwell Field and went up to Alaska on a Government transport. When I got back the pursuit group had been gathered at San Diego, although many of the boys had resigned. In the middle of 1919 we were all ordered to Donovan Field, and the days passed with more or less tranquility. The border patrol got under way, and a good many of the old bunch, including Groody, finally landed there.

Occasional tales in which Sparrow was the principal figure seeped over from Germany, where he was stationed with the Army of Occupation. He had been flying at a review, according to one of the stories, and had come down so low that he had frightened the horse of a very prominent general, resulting in the said four-star man being precipitated on the tip of his left ear in front of several thousand people. Sparrow had drawn a court-martial for that, and barely escaped with his commission intact.

Another yarn concerned his cracking up three ships in an attempt to fly under the Coblenz bridge. There were others, repeated with gusto, concerning the famous Sparrow.

I had been at Donovan three months when he arrived, without any warning. I was reading in my quarters when I heard a step on the porch, and the next minute a well-remembered voice was saying—

"Greetings, Jim!"

I was completely astonished, of course, and the first thing I said as I shook hands was—

"How did you get here?"

"They gave me my choice of stations, so I found out where you were and picked that. Don't mind, do you?"

"Don't talk like an ass!" I told him.

"Got demoted to a captain, I see," he observed. "Wartime rank has gone blooey, hasn't it? To think even I was once a first lieutenant!"

I was so glad to see him that I was surprized at myself. He was the same debonair little chap he had been in France, but his face seemed thinner and older than I had remembered. I noticed immediately that he wore no ribbon whatever on his blouse.

"Sit down, have a drink and a cigaret, and tell me what the —— you've been doing all this time, " I told him.

He swallowed the drink with gusto, lighted the cigaret, and bent those bright blue eyes of his on me.

"Now that you've been demoted back to captain, I can talk freely. I've been up at Coblenz with the Army of Occupation. While there I was by myself, so to speak, and couldn't fool anybody. Consequently, I have been vocational officer, survey officer, fourth assistant-deputy adjutant, and any other punk, unimportant job they could find me where I couldn't fly and could do the least harm. I'm still the same old deuce in the deck."

"Why so?" I inquired. "You're now a full-blown second lieutenent in the Army Air Service, seen service over the front, got a *Croix de Guerre* with a palm——"

"Can it, Jim," he said wearily. "You know about all that stuff as well as I do. Some friends of mine have been begging me to get out, but I won't do it until I've beaten it! It's the best chance I ever had to make good, Jim, and I'm going to stick; at least until some C. O., some time, somewhere, recognizes me as a —— good officer or flyer, and shows his opinion in no uncertain way! Right up to this living moment, Jim, I've been a bust in this man's army, and you know it!"

He broke off, took another drink, and grinned. Strange to say, it was when his face relaxed into a smile that I seemed to notice how much he had aged. Some of the boyish quality in it seemed to have been lost, and it seemed that a certain weariness and disillusion had taken its place.

"Where's Groody these days?" he asked finally.

"Down on the border," I told him. "He hasn't been back long, either."

"Living alone?" he asked, gesturing at the quarters.

"Not since you've come."

"Good. But listen, Jim." His eyes fixed themselves on mine, and he tapped the table with one boy's-size fist. "Ever since I hit this army I've been a self-attached tail to your kite. Your kite flew pretty high, and I bumped along behind. I want your word of honor that you won't use your influence for me in any manner whatsoever. Being a captain and an ace and all that stuff, you probably stand pretty high around here. I don't want a job or a trip or even a party that you are responsible for in any way whatever! Get what I mean? If you did what you've been doing for me for a long time, and I *did* get anywhere accidentally, I wouldn't be satisfied. And I'm going to lick this flying game, and this army business, and just as soon as I've done it I'm going to get out!"

I nodded my agreement with his words.

We spent the rest of the afternoon talking, and I gleaned some idea of the mental torture he had gone through while he was a prisoner in Germany, and afterward. I think that experience, and the persistent recollection of his mistake, was responsible more than anything else for the change in him.

Certain it was that the irrepressible cockiness formerly discernible in his attitude was subdued now, and more like an imitation of the real thing. He was trying to convince even himself, now, whereas before he had emerged from each new defeat with the ineradicable belief that sooner or later he would be on top, and that somehow he could fight his way to his modest goal.

Over at the officers' club he saw a good many men he knew, and his reception was heart-warming. Within a day or two, as usual, he was widely known on the field, and very popular. Nearly every one had heard about Sparrow Morse, and some one thing he had done, like that first solo of his, for instance, and any one was bound to like him. His size was a natural advertisement, and before a week had passed I am sure that every enlisted man, even, knew who Sparrow was and could tell a dozen more or less exaggerated stories of his career.

Officially, however, it was the same old story. He had no regular job, except supply officer of a skeleton squadron with less than thirty men in it. He was assigned to a lot of boards, and his duties consisted mostly of arduous, monotonous paper work, or auditing the post exchange books, and other such matters. As a flyer, or even as an officer in the ordinary sense, he was non-existent on the field, and he did not make any shining success in what poor duties he was called upon to accomplish.

Having been a member of the 313th, he was assigned to the pursuit group for his flying. That is, he could ask for a ship and get in such practise flights as he cared to. That meant that Sparrow took every available moment for flying. He spent hours in the air every day, and every moment of it was devoted to the attempt to become a good flyer. He fell all over the sky trying to learn how to stunt a ship, and he would sometimes make fifty or sixty landings in a day for practise.

I knew what the idea in the back of his head was, and because I knew it I appreciated his self-control the more. Flying is an individual matter, and some little shavetail that can take a ship up and turn it inside out can be more prominent on an aviation field and throughout the Air Service than a distinguished colonel, for instance.

The making of a flashy reputation is the work of only a day or two. If a man is fool enough—and some flyers are—he can grandstand down the main street of a city, do low stunting over the ball park and endanger the lives of others beside himself, and accomplish other foolish maneuvers which will result in his being known as a wild, reckless, preternaturally skillful aviator.

But Sparrow, although he would have given half his life to be pointed out as a wonderful flyer, would not descend to such subterfuges, He wanted to satisfy himself, primarily, that he *could* fly, and then force legitimate recognition from others. He refused a counterfeit reputation as he refused to wear the *Croix de Guerre* he felt he had not earned.

Donovan Field watched and laughed and sympathized and razzed him goodnaturedly. Some of the best flyers tried to help him in an unostentatious way, but Sparrow simply could not improve. He could do a sloppy loop, a fair reenversement, and come out of a tail-spin after a fashion, but such things as the falling-leaf or barrel-rolling or upside-down work were completely beyond his ken. He could not even make a good landing more than one time out of five.

There were occasional flashes of the old Sparrow Morse. For instance, at the formal review we had for General Pershing, there was to be a flying exhibition afterward. Several hundred onlookers were present, and their cars lined the field. Sparrow dressed up as a woman, and I escorted him. Four other men were in on the scheme. Under the interested eyes of the crowd Sparrow exclaimed over the ships, and finally asked permission to sit in one while the motor was running.

He was lifted in respectfully, and then he took off, screaming as if the ship was running off with him. Shriek after shriek rent the air from the women in the crowd. Sparrow got off the ground, and then the ship commenced to wobble and dip and stagger about as if out of control.

It would have been a good joke, but naturally something had to happen to spoil it. Sparrow tried to give too life-like an imitation of the way a ship might act when out of control, and cracked up beautifully in the center of the field while strong men grew pale and women cried and fainted.

Finally the C. O. decided to treat the matter as a joke, and again Sparrow's commission was saved.

Shortly after he got out of the hospital he was buckling down to his flying again. He was in the air too much, as if his last *faux pas* had stung him into more herculean efforts. Many a time I was on the point of remonstrating with him. I knew he was still ill at ease and nervous in a ship, and the strain of constant flying was wearing him down. I wanted to tell him he was foolish to take it to heart because he could not fly. It was as impossible to make an airman out of him as it would be to make a big leaguer or an All American football man out of the average man on the street.

It was not long before the realization of this came to Sparrow—and he was forced to add flying to the long list of things he could not do. It nearly broke him, but it made the final chapter more satisfying, I guess.

IT HAPPENED down in Corpus Christi, on the Gulf of Mexico. The world awakened one morning to cast an eye over screaming headlines which told the story of a huge tidal wave, complicated by a hurricane, which had inundated the flourishing Summer resort of Corpus Christi and, in addition to wrecking the town, had washed a thousand or more people out into the Gulf. Telegraph lines were down, railroad tracks washed away, telephone wires wrecked, and the back-country around the town was flooded.

That same day some planes from the border were down there, and the day after that twelve ships followed from Kelly Field. I was in charge of the Kelly Field group, and I took Sparrow with me as my back-seat man. I broke my promise to him in a way, but I felt that he would give anything in the world to go, and he couldn't do much harm in the back seat.

Corpus Christi was a shambles. The business section of the city was built practically on a level with the beach, and the residential district was set on a natural terrace above the main part of town. Where there had been two miles of bath-houses, dancing pavilions, and cottages along the beach there was now nothing but wreckage. The stores and buildings of the business section were crumbling, and the streets were blocked with ruins. As we spiraled down over the stricken city I forgot houses tilted on end and streets choked with everything from dead horses to overturned automobiles, and looked out over the Gulf. The now tranquil waters were dotted with floating bodies and pathetic wreckage—chairs, tables, dogs. I looked around at Sparrow. He was crouched down in the rear cock-pit, and below his owl-like goggles his face was set and white.

We landed on the field where we saw the border ships, and I put my outfit at the disposal of Captain Kennard. Tex MacDowell and Dumpy Scarth and Jimmy Jennings and the rest of the border crowd were there, waiting for us between patrols. No sooner had we turned off our motors than the terrible stench of decaying flesh reached our nostrils. Dead horses were strewn around the ruins of a barn closeby, and not a quarter of a mile away one of the labor-shifts which worked night and day was digging graves into which the men dumped victims of the debacle without identification or delay.

We found that the estimate of dead was now only six hundred. Martial law had been declared, and a major who had happened to be visiting the resort was in command. He had been on his honeymoon, and his bride was missing. He worked like a man who was dead on his feet, and his face haunts me to this day.

Much happened during the week we were there—we patroled the Gulf and the back-country for survivors, and dropped them food and water. We were on guard duty all night, and I personally shot four looters. Three ships made regular trips to San Antonio, carrying medical supplies and necessary things like yeast for making bread. Our only food was coffee and sandwiches, served to us, as to the population of Corpus Christi, in breadlines at the churches. Every person one met had been either financially ruined, or had lost one or more members of their families, and over the whole stricken town, heavy and nauseating, hung that awful stench of putridity and decay.

Our first patrol came the afternoon of the first day. Captain Kennard asked our bunch whether we could all swim, and every one nodded. We were given sectors to patrol, and our observers were given rubber bags with food and water in them, attached to floats. I noticed that Sparrow was not himself, but I laid that to the depressing influences all about him.

Our sector lay far out over the Gulf. We flew low over the water, watching floating bodies closely for signs of life. We found two wretched survivors clinging to planks, and dropped them food and water. They were both men, and they were pretty far gone. Every now and then I could see the fin of a shark cutting the quiet, muddied water, and once I saw a white belly flash just below the surface of the water as the monster took a mouthful from a floating corpse.

I did not point these things out to Sparrow, feeling instinctively that they would have an even worse effect on him than they did on me. Those things take on a very personal significance when one knows that the slightest failure in the roaring motor ahead of him means that he will be down there in the water himself. I scanned oil-pressure and air-pressure and thermometer with detailed care, and one time when a bump hit us and the motor sputtered I had a moment of near-panic which transcended anything I had felt over the lines.

I looked around at Sparrow when the big Liberty motor cut in again, and he grinned at me, but his eyes were overflowing with fear that he tried not to show.

Knowing him as well as I did, and watching him more closely than ever, I saw that the four hours a day we spent over the Gulf were straining him to the breaking point. And yet he not only made every trip he was scheduled for, but was an eager volunteer for extra duty. The third day we were there he was assigned to office duty at headquarters, and he pleaded for fifteen minutes with Captain Kennard to release him.

"You don't know when you're well off youngster," rasped the stocky little border man, "but go to it!"

And Sparrow did. Two days later, when there was an extra ship on the line due to a special emergency in town, he applied for permission to take it out on patrol.

"Two ships with just a pilot each can do more spotting than one with two men," he pleaded, and Captain Kennard let him go.

Our flying duty by then was mainly taking care of starving survivors who had reached isolated spots of safety, or were floating on rafts. Every boat for a hundred miles had been smashed to pieces in the storm, and as yet there were only a few rowboats to do duty picking up the victims of the catastrophe who were still alive. There were literally hundreds who were starving to death in the flooded country or out on the Gulf itself.

Our beat lay across the Gulf, and along a strip of the opposite shore which was temporarily only an island, and where a few dozen people had collected. We carried food and water for them. The two ships saved Sparrow and I an extra trip, for one could not have carried enough.

We got over there all right, and dropped our supplies to the huddling group. The golden flood of sunshine seemed incongruous as it poured over such a far-spreading panorama of misery and death. As we roared along on our way back across the Gulf the sky was blue and cloudless. Above all was cleanliness and peace, while below there was nothing that was not grim and ugly.

I was flying slightly behind Sparrow, when I saw him nose over. We were less than a half-mile from land. For a moment I thought that his motor had gone dead on him, but then the invisible propeller on his ship relieved me. When a propeller is invisible to the eye it is revolving fast enough to keep a ship in the air.

As he dived for the water I saw what he was about. There was a body down there, flung across a big plank, and there might be life in it. I watched from above as Sparrow swooped past it, and I could detect no sign of life from the bloated corpse. Sparrow was very low as he went by.

Once again Sparrow Morse fumbled. Above him as I was, it was the disturbance of the water which warned me. The next second the big De Haviland plane described a somersault in the air, and settled upside down and half-submerged. Sparrow's landing-gear had dipped into the water, and at the speed he was going it had wrecked him.

In an instant I was diving my ship toward the water. Just what I had in mind I do not know—some hazy idea of helping Sparrow, I suppose. He might have been stunned by the impact of his head against the water, or he might be unable to disentangle himself from his belt and the partially wrecked ship, and get to the surface.

My air-speed meter read close to two hundred miles an hour when I flashed past the floating DeHaviland. The water was still disturbed around the ship—mute evidence of Sparrow's struggles down beneath the surface. I zoomed, and then wing-turned my ship. If he did not appear by the time I was headed for him again, I decided to stall into the Gulf right beside him and see what I could do.

When his head appeared above water the sudden easing of the strain left me limp. I felt as if I had just taken a good breath of air after having been nearly strangled. Sparrow crawled up on the ship, and in a moment was perched on the tail. The motor, of course, was underneath the water and the tail-surfaces were high in the air. Despite the grimness of the emergency, there was something irresistably comic in the tiny figure roosting down there like a frog in the midst of a huge puddle.

It did not take me more than a few seconds to decide that Sparrow must swim for it. I was positive, for some reason, that he was not up to a half-mile swim. The DeHaviland would become water-logged, and sink within two hours. Chances of getting a boat of any sort to him within the time limit were so exceedingly slim that it was useless to depend on that source of rescue at all.

His salvation, I thought, was to get a plank, and paddle himself to shore.

The big plank which upheld what I was certain was a lifeless body was about fifty yards from Sparrow's temporary raft.

I swooped down past him, and he waved at me. I could see a grin on his face. I motioned toward the plank, and signaled my meaning as well as I could. Then I went higher, and droned around him to see what he was going to do.

Like most of the rest of us, he flew without either boots or puttees, in order to facilitate swimming in the event of a forced landing. I saw him remove his shoes, and everything else but his underwear. I watched anxiously for sharks. With so much dead flesh to prey upon, it scarcely seemed that they would bother a live man, but nevertheless the appearance of one of those sinister fins would have given me the worst moments of my life.

I wondered a little as Sparrow lowered himself into the water instead of diving. And then I knew the reason; if Sparrow Morse had ever taken more than three consecutive strokes in the water, there was nothing to indicate it in that wildly threshing figure below.

For what seemed like an eternity I watched him. His progress was so slow that it was maddening, and he was flinging his arms and legs around in the wild, panic-stricken efforts of a non-swimmer to stay on the surface. It did not seem humanly possible for him to make the distance. I circled above him, ready to crash into the water when he went down the first time.

By some miracle he stayed afloat, and made slow progress. His hysterical efforts grew weaker, and it seemed that he was about to sink. It was then, I firmly believe, that Sparrow gave one of those indications of the spirit within him which hinted at more than the fundamental nerve he had shown even in attempting the swim, or flying; the capacity to rise to it when the emergency was great enough.

When he was exhausted down there, with a little less than half the distance to go, he seemed to settle down. I knew what despairing thoughts must be running through his head, and that it was almost inevitable that he burn himself up in a last desperate burst—but he did not.

I thought I saw him sink, but the next instant he was on the surface again, and he was doing a feeble, ineffectual breaststroke. It seemed to me that I could feel the struggle he was having with himself—almost as if I myself was down there, fighting his fight. He kept himself from the fatal panic which would have destroyed him, and inch by inch he won his way by forcing himself to swim.

Finally he reached the plank, and pushed the body off. He lay there motionless for a long time, arms and legs trailing in the water and his body half-awash.

I had machine-guns on my ship, as all the Donovan Field ships did, and I made up my mind to cruise around and settle the hash of any shark that might be nosing about. Sparrow came to life, finally, and started paddling toward shore. It was slow work, of course. Other patrol ships, on their way back, circled over us, and I knew that they would carry the news back to headquarters.

For two hours I circled over him, constantly scrutinizing the water in a half-mile circle for signs of sharks. Luckily, none appeared. Finally the boys got hold of a patched-up row-boat, and just as my gas was giving out and I had switched on the reserve tank I saw the boat put out from shore. I waited a bit longer—so long, in fact, that I had to land on the field with a dead motor and barely made it.

I told no one about the reason for Sparrow's wreck, nor that he could not swim. They assumed, of course, that his motor had gone bad. Captain Kennard and I, among many others, were waiting on the beach when the boat landed, and the more-dead-than-alive Sparrow was lifted out. He grinned, and proceeded to tell Captain Kennard that his wreck was due to his own lack of skill.

"Just a dumb, boneheaded, inexcusable piece of rotten flying," he said, swaying on his feet and shaking all over. "I ought to've been left out there to shift for myself——"

He was smiling, but the hard sheen of his eyes reflected no mirth. I have seen that look in men's eyes before, and it is not a pleasant sight to see.

Ordinarily those flyers would have given reign to certain humorous comments on what had happened, but as Sparrow's voice trailed off into silence there was not a sound. Finally Captain Kennard broke the silence—

"We all make mistakes——"

He did not finish, because Sparrow keeled over in his tracks.

HE HAD been scheduled to be one of the guard officers from midnight to six A. M. When he came to, wrapped in blankets and with a good deal of whisky in him, the first thing he said was:

"I'm all right—just a little tired. I'll take my shift tonight, cap'n."

"What do you mean?" queried Kennard, unable to comprehend what Sparrow was getting at.

"Guard," he explained. "I'll get some clothes, and be all O. K."

No one could dissuade him, and Kennard let him have his way. He slept during the evening—we had cots set up in what had been the town morgue—and I awakened him at eleven o'clock. We went over to a church, got coffee and sandwiches from weary women whose eyes reflected unutterable tragedy, and at twelve o'clock took our details to the sectors assigned to us. We each had twelve men, residents of the town, armed with Colts. They were silent, worn men with sunken bloodshot eyes. Their souls were still too numb, I think, to realize all that had happened. They were like automatons.

Our sectors lay together, and formed a strip half a mile long and three hundred yards wide along the beach. The territory included two streets laying parallel with the water-line, and extended down to the beach itself. I had the first three blocks, nearest the center of town, and Sparrow the next three. It was in the section of the city which had been most affected by the tidal wave. The bungalows had been torn bodily from their moorings, and it was necessary to climb over heaps of débris to get anywhere. The beach was a high-piled mass of tangled wreckage. What clearing had been done was mostly in the center of the business section, and our territory was practically untouched.

We disposed of our men, and sat down together at the corner where our sectors joined. I had a sodden morris-chair, and Sparrow lay on a half-smashed chaise longue. Immediately behind us a house was practically on end, and a piano protruded from one partly smashed wall.

"Sparrow, you never swam a stroke before today, did you?" I asked him.

I had made up my mind to tell him some things that were on my mind. During those days when he had been flying directly under my eye, so to speak, a conviction had been forced upon me: that Sparrow Morse was doomed to break his neck, and that right speedily, if he stuck to the flying game.

"No, Jim, I never did," he answered.

His cigaret-butt glowed in the dense darkness. We all smoked continually to weaken the terrible stench which hung in the air.

There was silence for a moment, and then he chuckled.

"I picked a —— of a swimming pool to learn in, didn't I?" he inquired. "Lots of nice playmates, with fins and white bellies——"

"And good swimmers, too," I told him.

I was floundering, mentally, in my endeavor to open the subject I wanted to talk on. You see, I had never acted in just the capacity I was planning to then. I did not consider Sparrow a friend, exactly—somehow he seemed more like a kid to me, and I detest giving advice just as much as I do receiving it. I thought a lot of the little squirt, fighting his life-long battle and accepting Fate's swings to the jaw without going down, but I couldn't go at him in straight man-to-man fashion, somehow.

"Listen, Sparrow," I took the plunge. "I'll bet any man in the service is giving his folks gray hair—if he's fortunate enough to have any. And Sparrow, you know as well as I do that you're not cut out for a flyer. It's nothing against you—you can't fly any more than I can sit down and play anything from a harmonica to a pipe-organ the way you can. Why wait until you go up a thousand feet some day and dive eleven hundred, and you're picked up on a shovel and enter Plymouth in a coffin?"

I was glad that it was so dark, and that he was only a vague bulk in the shadow. I might have lost my nerve if I could have seen him.

"Now wait a minute," I said when he started to say something. "I know what you're going to say. That you've been a dub all your life, and that you won't quit until you've accomplished something. That does you credit, Sparrow, and I can understand your attitude, but right now it's wrong on at least two counts. In the first place, you're not the same frumpy-looking little hick that came into the Air Service. You've been around, you've learned a lot, and you've made a —— good record—not on the surface, underneath. You're an officer in the army, you went over the lines, you're still with us. You'll tell me you've never amounted to anything as a flyer. You're right—because you aren't cut out for it, I tell you. You're like a man saying he won't rest until he licks Jack Dempsey.

"Maybe you never have received the plaudits of an admiring throng, and had the boss shove a raise in pay on you. But what the —— chance have you ever had? There's a lot of things in this world you can do, and sooner or later you'll find one of 'em. You get out of the Air Service, where you don't belong any more than I do singing tenor in the Metropolitan Opera House, and then hunt around and get set."

I was talking slowly, and I was aware that I was not getting my meaning across as clearly as I wanted to. I waited for him to say something, and my nerves commenced to jump as I watched his motionless body sprawled on the lounge, and the silence remained unbroken.

I threw away my cigaret and got to my feet.

"Listen, old man," I said. "You're the nerviest little cuss I've ever seen, and I'm just trying to be your friend, see? People differ; men who can fight like —— and aren't afraid of any man alive are scared to death of lightning; I've faced guns in my time without funking it and yet I'm a chicken-livered coward over going to a dentist. You made a try for that plank today when you didn't think you had a chance—but you're afraid of the air. For —— sake don't play with your neck in a profession where the chances would be one in twelve you'd be bumped off this year if you could fly like George Groody or Tex MacDowell."

"You're right about the flying, Jim," he said finally, and there was something dogged in his voice. "I'm not scared, exactly, but I—haven't any confidence in myself, and I'm nervous, probably. But that isn't the main thing, now. I've got a chance in the army, that I never had anywhere else. The best I've ever been able to do is be a clerk, or less. Failed even at that. But here's the point—maybe you can't understand—I've been an officer three years now, and right here tonight, Jim, you know I've been a failure. Not flying alone—everything. I've cracked up a hundred thousand dollars' worth of ships, and never got a Hun or trained a cadet.

"Aside from that, though, I've never held a real job in the service. I never did a —— thing a twenty-dollar civilian clerk or an average sergeant couldn't do better. You know I've always been a dub—but somehow that's sort of in the background, now. It's all simmered down to this—back there I always had the feeling that if I ever got the chance at something big maybe I might come across. And Jim, if I left this —— army now and got to be President I could never forget that I was a total bust while I was in it! Get me?

"I've had my chance, but it isn't over. Maybe I won't ever learn to fly, but some day, by accident or something, I'll get a chance at a real job in this man's army and I'll give it fits. I don't want much—I can be satisfied if the Old Man says I did a good piece of work, or even if I know myself I have.

"Right now I've given up all hope of being a flyer. Out there today I cracked up a ship that could have saved lives. I'm through on that score. I wish I could be one of the gang—the Air Service has got under my skin, Jim.

"I'll keep on flying, of course, to hang on. And at that they say a lot of fellows can't get the hang of it and then all of a sudden it just comes to 'em—d'you believe that?"

"Sure," I soothed him. "The only thing is that it seems to come hard for you. You know—any man knows of some things he can't do. A wonderful painter may not be able to catch a baseball to save his life. It seems to me maybe you picked something in flying that you just can't do, Sparrow. You might have been a wonderful artilleryman, able to hit a fly twenty miles away with a big gun, or something like that."

"Well, I can keep on trying—and maybe

do something on the ground," he said. "Probably I'm crazy——"

What are you going to do with a man like that? And as I tried to put myself in his place I'll be —— if I didn't discover that I'd have felt just as he did.

"There's bound to come a time when I cease to be permanent recorder of two-for-a-cent boards or fourth assistant-deputy auditor or some other —— clerk's job that I can't do," he went on. "The first day I knock 'em dead I'll get out—although I'll hate to. But I'll know I got there once in my life!"

Gradually he began to talk reminiscently, and without intending to he put more in his words than he dreamed of about his losing battle with life. From time to time we went on tours of inspection, because those poor —— of guards were liable to fall asleep from sheer exhaustion. When we came back to our corner, however, the conversation always resumed where it had left off. I sat back and smoked while Sparrow talked.

It seemed to me that the wreckage and ruin all about me faded away, and the homely vividness of his words caught me up in the course of his narrative and bore me along. It seemed to me that I was actually living his life with him. It was that old feeling of ground-school days—I wasn't Jim Morton, drifting along casually through life, but Sparrow Morse, ever battering my head against a stone wall and being hurled back, bruised and bloody, to gather myself for a new charge.

When dawn revealed the foul ugliness around us I was depressed and weary. I felt beaten—because I felt that Sparrow Morse had lost another fight. He didn't think so. Fresh from the narrative of a lifetime of failure, he faced the new day with pathetic, unconquerable hope that he would carry the honorable scars on his soul into a new battle which he would win.

TWO days later the relief trains began to come through, and by that time our work was over. We went back to Donovan Field. Shortly thereafter Sparrow, without saying anything to me about it, applied for an opportunity to attend the photographic school at Langham Field, Virginia. His application was accepted with suspicious celerity, denoting glowing tributes from the C. O. at Donovan, and warm recommendations that Sparrow be speedily sent to Langham. Which always means that said C. O. doesn't mind getting rid of the object of his encomiums, and is happy because some other high-ranker has him. A C. O. always hangs on to a good man through —— and high-water.

When his orders arrived he told me about it.

"A photographic officer does only straight flying, and has a section under him," he pointed out. "Maybe I can do it. And up there I may have a chance to sort of—start over, without being the field joke, good for laughing purposes only."

I encouraged him, but I was doubtful. A stiff course in photography would not be in his line, in my judgment. The definite technical knowledge, and above all the skill needed in repairing those tremendously delicate and intricate aerial cameras, would be extremely hard for him to attain. It was not in his line. But he went, unquenchable hope buoying him up, and thereby came close to the end of the road.

A FEW months later I followed him to Langham Field, and with me were a hundred and fifty of the veterans of the service. General Mallory, the chief, had at last put over the proposition on which he had been working for years—a chance to officially test his contention that airplanes and bombs could be effective against the most powerful navy, and that great gray dreadnaughts of the sea would be powerless without a skyfull of airplanes above them to protect them. Eighty miles out at sea from the twin capes of Chesepeake Bay we were to try our hand against some German ships of the line.

I had not heard a word from Sparrow—I think he disliked to write unless he had success to chronicle. Just before the special train left for Langham carrying the border and Donovan Field contingent, we heard of Sparrow's latest achievement. Frank Hall had just come in from Virginia, and he told us. It seemed that Sparrow had been pulled out of the photographic course, and had been assigned to a squadron. They were already practising bombing up there, and Sparrow had been sent out with a load of four one-hundred-pound duds to drop. The target was a big raft, towed by a launch. Sparrow had picked out the trolley ferry to

Norfolk—a scow towed by a tug—and dropped his bombs at that.

Not knowing that it was Sparrow Morse in the air, who naturally wouldn't hit what he aimed at, nor that the bombs were duds, the people on the ferry were somewhat disturbed, according to Hall, when hundred-pound projectiles were showered at them from the sky. They were not easy in their minds, as it were. They went so far as to make hysterical reports about the matter, and Sparrow was inducted into the exalted position of second assistant armament officer, on duty at the bomb dump, far away from ships or the air.

That was his job when we arrived. He was living in the bachelor officers' quarters, and had arranged that I room with him. When I found him his face was one broad grin, but he looked years older than he had when he left Donovan. There were hollows in his cheeks and circles under his eyes, and in moments of repose his shoulders drooped as if the discouragement in his mind had affected every muscle in his body.

It was hours before I made any leading inquiry, and then I asked as casually as I could—

"How're tricks, Sparrow?"

"A two-spot can't take tricks," he answered.

All that Summer he stayed on duty at the bomb-dump. He had a hard time getting his ten flights a month to draw flying pay. He was no part of the biggest undertaking the service had ever known. Those were tense months, when the cream of the flyers in brand-new twin-motored bombers worked night and day to perfect themselves for the tests. Sparrow looked on, and brooded, and drank.

He had turned into a booze-hound. Night after night he drank himself into temporary forgetfulness and content. Sober, he was far from the man we had all known. Every night the gang gathered somewhere, but Sparrow was a wet-blanket at the feast—unless he was illuminated. Previously he would have been the belle of the ball, but now no instrument could tempt him and calls for a song fell on deaf ears—unless he was at a certain stage of drunkenness.

Shortly after we arrived I was sent to Cleveland to fly a new Martin Bomber from the factory back to Langham. I got in after dark, and as I came up the steps of the quarters I heard a familiar voice singing to the strains of a guitar—

"Come listen, my friends, to the tale of a Turk,
"A Turk whom the people all fear;
"He's well-known to fame, by that thrice-cursed name,
"Of Abdulla Bul Bul Emir!"

It was Sparrow, and I was so tickled to hear him that I thought perhaps some good luck had come his way and that he was himself again. I stood outside the open door for a moment. The room was crowded with flyers, and Sparrow went on—

"When they needed a man to encourage the van,
"Or harass the foe from the rear;
"They only need shout for that bold roustabout,
"Called Abdulla Bul Bul Emir!"

But he was cock-eyed drunk, that's all.

Finally the arduous months of practise and taut expectancy were over, preliminary tests against destroyers and smaller ships were out of the way, and in the misty gray dawn of a September day we came out on the line for the real test; two one-thousand-pound bombs to each Martin Bomber, to be dropped on the *Ostfriesland*, former monarch of the German navy. The Martins, squat monsters of the air, were crouched on the ground in long lines, as if ready to spring at their prey. Somehow the kick of it was lost to me, however, because huddled on a bench was Sparrow Morse, looking on while his comrades started for their task before the eyes of the whole world.

Eighty miles out at sea the Atlantic fleet spread fan-wise around the stately target. Representatives of all the great countries of the world, dozens of Congressmen and Senators, the heads of our own military and naval establishments, newspapermen who would flash the results of the test all over the earth—all were there, and yet I could not forget little Sparrow, roosting lonesomely back there on the all but deserted field.

The Martins circled, and in single file went over the target. The bombs hurtled downward, and the helmeted flyers who handled the bombsights that day made a reputation which will never die among those who know. In eighteen minutes the *Ostfriesland* went down, and revolutionized military science. General Mallory's DeHaviland played around exultantly, and down on the decks below thousands of men went wild. I cursed myself because

I could not get into the spirit of the thing.

General Mallory beat us home, and was waiting when the Martins taxied to the line. He gathered us about him, and in a husky, stammering way tried to express his appreciation. Sparrow was there—but not in the bunch. He waited for me, well out of earshot. His back was toward us, and his eyes were bent downward. It was hell.

I WAS held over at Langham when the bunch left, to attend the field officers' school. This was in the days when even a first lieutenant had some chance to become a major before he became superannuated. Sparrow was never taken back in the photographic school, but was installed as second assistant adjutant. He did not seem to care. I did not have the heart to remonstrate with him about his drinking, and took too much myself, at times, to keep him company.

Then I was ordered to fly a Martin to Cook Field, at Dayton, for complete overhaul. I was allowed to pick my own relief pilot for the long trip, and I chose Sparrow. At first he did not want to go.

"It'll be a change for you, and likewise give you a chance to try your hand at flying a big ship," I told him.

His objections were half-hearted, and he finally gave in. The old Sparrow would have jumped at the chance, and been full of zest at the prospect, but the hollow-eyed little fellow whom I was talking to took no interest whatever in the trip—nor anything else that I could discover.

IT WAS a raw, cold morning in later November when we started. We were bundled up in heavy fur-lined coats, fur-lined helmets, and thick gauntlets. It was a nasty trip the first half of the way, to Moundsville on the banks of the Ohio. The course lay above the towering mountains of West Virginia, and the slate-gray clouds which lay heavily above us were none too high. I warmed both motors carefully—I never start on a trip like that unless I personally O. K. the warm-up.

All the needles on the crowded instrument board read correctly, however, and as my eyes roved over temperature gages, oil-pressure gages, and noted the readings of tachometers and ammeters and air-pressure indicators I could find no flaw. The big Liberties, one on each wing, fired evenly, and both of them turned up well above sixteen-fifty.

Sparrow strapped himself in beside me, and turned on the double-throttles between the seats as I braced myself against the wheel. We trundled across the level, frozen ground, and took the air smoothly.

At two thousand feet I set the course by the floating compass, and unstrapped my safety-belt. I motioned to Sparrow, and he did the same. It is tight work to change seats, but not unduly dangerous when two men sit side by side, as they do in a twin-motored plane like the Bomber we were in. He took the wheel, and it seemed to me his weary eyes lightened behind his big goggles as he handled a four-ton ship for the first time, with nine-hundred horsepower pulling it along.

With the motors to each side of us, there was no terrific propeller blast washing back at us, but there was no wind-shield either. The cold penetrated my heavy clothing, and I was shivering continuously. We had to get seven thousand feet to cross the mountains, and at that height we were just beneath the clouds—and it was cold.

We roared along up the James River, past Petersburg and Richmond, and then the terrain became dotted more thickly with clumps of trees. Shortly after passing Richmond rough, low-rolling foothills were beneath us, washing like waves against the foot of the towering Cumberlands. In two hours we were crossing heavily wooded peaks that jutted into the sky in jagged, untamed majesty. Some of them were less than a thousand feet beneath us, although our altimeter read 7,500 feet.

As far as we could see there was a panorama of forest and cliffs and ravines—a far-stretching land of wild grandeur and lurking death for unfortunate airmen. There were occasional cabins, and small, half-cleared fields, and once in a while a narrow valley wound along between the hills. I scrutinized the instruments continually, and waited impatiently to see the Ohio, and flat land ahead.

Then, without warning, one right-hand Liberty sputtered, fired spasmodically, and died. I worked the throttle desperately, but it would not catch again. The left-hand motor dragged us loggily through the sky, right-wing down and turning sluggishly.

I grabbed the wheel and nosed the ship down to keep flying speed, and loosened my belt. Sparrow was already prepared, and we changed seats again. I strapped myself in the driver's seat, and inspected the ground to see whether there was a possibility that we might get down without smashing ourselves as well as the ship.

It was a relief to see a narrow strip of field on the side of a hill. It looked reasonably smooth, and it was large enough to stall into if one landed up the slope. The heavy Martin would stop rolling quickly on the steep grade, and there was a good chance that we might make it safely.

I had about four thousand feet to work in, so I cut the good motor, turned off the gas and ignition on the right Liberty, and spiraled down. I was straightened for the field a good five hundred feet above it, and perhaps a thousand feet from the lower end. It was tight work at the last, because I overshot a bit and had to side-slip over the trees which grew lower down on the slope, and side-slipping a Martin is not easy. However, the big ship mushed down on the ground, and stopped twenty-five yards from the thick growth at the top of the clearing.

"Did you see any house or other symptom of life?" I asked Sparrow, and he shook his head.

"Looks like a long walk," he remarked. "I never thought you could get a Martin in here, though—we're lucky wherever we are."

"Let's take a look at this field before we cock a snook at the motor," I suggested. "It'll warm us up, besides."

It had grown colder, and we ran down the field to get the blood to circulating. Then, with the swinging arms, we looked over chances for a take-off.

The field was reasonably smooth, but very small. Taking off down hill, the obstacle was a row of trees, their tops perhaps ten feet above the lowest level of the clearing. If the ship did not make it, it meant smashing into those trees. Immediately below them the hill dropped sharply into a small, rooky ravine. That would make a nasty wreck, with practically no chance of coming out alive.

After considerable cogitation, I spake as follows:

"The motor going dead like that means that probably the feed-line is clogged. A short circuit wouldn't account for it on a double-ignition motor. If I'm right, I can fix it, probably. And by putting small blocks under the wheels, giving her full gun and getting the tail in the air as she hops the blocks under full power, I can get a running start. I believe I can make it. It would cost the Government two thousand dollars to dismantle up here and haul the ship to a railroad."

"It looks like an impossibility to me," stated Sparrow, swinging his arms to keep warm. "But you're the doctor, Jim."

"Being one of these scared birds that hates to ride with any one else under any circumstances, I'll admit I wouldn't take off out of here as a passenger with any pilot on earth, the waters under the earth, or the heavens above the earth," I told him. "I'd really feel better if you didn't try it with me, Sparrow."

"Go to ——, will you?" invited Sparrow, and that was that.

I was right about the trouble with the motor—some refuse had got in the gas-tank, some way, and had plugged the feed-line. It took me three hours to fix it—my hands were numb and my fingers clumsy. Sparrow handed me tools and lamented the fact that he could not help.

Finally the job was done. The ship was facing uphill, and I got a dead log to use for a wheel-block on the warm-up. A few drops of icy rain fell as we got the block, and presently the slight shower turned into hail. The clouds were darkening slightly, but the drops were not coming fast enough as yet to make any material difference in flying.

We made as much speed as we could, I got the log under the wheels, and swung the propeller on the right motor. Sparrow was too small to do it, because it was set so high. It was a welcome sound when the Liberty caught and idled along sweetly. We started the left-hand motor, and then I left Sparrow to warm them while I sought the small blocks I needed to hold the ship back for a few seconds until the motors were running wide open. I had to get them of such size that the ship would hop them under full power, but not until the motors were running at full speed.

I finally found two chunks of wood which suited my purpose. When I emerged from the woods with them the Liberties were running wide open on the final test, and both were hitting perfectly on all twelve cylinders. The leaden sky looked as if it was about to precipitate a down-pour at any moment, and occasional small hailstones stung my face as I came forth from the shelter of the trees.

Sparrow was bending over the instrument board as he slowly drew the throttles back and brought the motors back to idling speed. The cock-pits jutting forth in front of the big four-ton bomber were higher than my head, and the little fellow looked about as large as a flea on a dog's back in comparison with the huge ship.

"I'll pull the blocks, and you turn her around—get as close to the trees as you can!" I shouted above the rumbling of the motors, and he nodded.

I would have preferred to turn the ship myself, but I did not want to hurt his feelings. Besides, it was a difficult task to climb in and out of the cock-pit with the motors running—one had to climb into the fuselage in back, and then crawl forward over the bomb-compartment. The two propeller-tips came within inches of the cock-pit.

I crawled underneath the left wing, and started to remove the heavy log. It had been wedged down by the huge tires, and did not come loose easily. I put my left arm in front of the wheel and tugged with both hands. I finally started it, and was just beginning to pull it forward and toward me when the motor on the wing over my head burst into a roar. Before I could move the Martin started moving around to the left. There was an instant of terrible pain as the left wheel crushed my arm—and then I lost consciousness.

When I came to there was a loud roar in my ears, and I had to grit my teeth to keep from groaning. For a while I could think of nothing but the torture of my crushed arm. It took me a few seconds to locate myself. It was dark around me, and always that incessant roar——

Then I knew where I was. I was lying on the floor of the fuselage, Sparrow Morse's coat was laid over me, and my head was resting on a cushion which had been taken from the front cock-pit. And the bomber was in the air—pitching and tossing as the Liberties sang their deafening song of power.

I got to my knees, and groped forward. My arm was in a crude sling made from handkerchiefs, and the pain of it was greater than anything I have ever been called on to endure. For a moment I could not comprehend the reason for the darkness, and then as I gripped myself and fought clear of the daze I was in I realized that a cover had been placed over the round opening of the fuselage.

It was Sparrow's blouse. I ripped and tore at it like a wild man with my good hand, and finally one side of it came loose. As it did so, hailstones bounced from the flooring underneath me. The linen sides of my prison were being pounded by the hail, I realized then, for I could hear the spat of them above the roar of the motors.

I got my goggles over my eyes, and swayed dizzily as I tried to stand up. When I thrust my head through the opening my face was battered wickedly by the hail.

I bent my head and stayed there for a moment. Ahead of me was the high bomb compartment, and in front of that the pilot's seat, but there was no pilot discernible. Sparrow was so small that his head was not visible above the top of the barrier between us. The struts on either wing were sheathed in ice, and the varnish on the linen had been cut off by the hail. It was terribly cold, and below us the ground was just a vague gray mass, its details undecipherable through the storm.

It was like riding a fantom ship without a pilot through a nightmare of cold and storm. I fought down the panic born of my weakness and pain, and tried to comprehend the situation. Sparrow was up there in front, without coat or blouse, facing the rain of hail which had already made of my own face a raw, red mask. The cock-pit of a Martin is in the very nose of the ship, with no wind-shield, even, to help protect the pilot. The mere thought of what he was going through was greater torture than the pain of my arm.

Half-delirious, I realized, as if it was a nightmare, all that must have happened. He had got me into the ship, covered me with his own coat, and made that difficult take-off in a four-ton plane that he had never flown before that day. Now he was fighting through the blizzard, with not even a coat to cover him, over country that he did not know and could not even see, battered by the storm and fighting along hopelessly and standing such mental and physical torture as it falls to the lot of few men to endure. Any flyer will know that I am not exaggerating.

Weakness overpowered me, and I sank to the floor. My arm was a mass of clotted blood, and at the slightest movement that terrible pain increased until—well, it was pretty bad. I huddled on the floor, finally, and hoped that the final crash would come soon. I wanted to get it over with.

Only semi-conscious, I finally realized it when the roar of the motors died away. I tried to get up to see what was happening, but could not. I slid along the flooring as the ship banked steeply, and for a moment had to fight for consciousness. Suddenly the ship scraped along the ground. The next second there came a rending crash, I was thrown forward, and blessed oblivion descended upon me.

I CAN remember but little until the next day. I was operated on, under ether, and the first thing I can really vouch for is coming to and looking up at Major Nettleton, a flight surgeon from Cook Field, who had arrived to help the local doctors with us. He told me that my arm would be all right, although I would never be able to grip tightly with the fingers of my left hand.

"How's Sparrow?" I asked him.

"He was as nearly frozen to death as a man can be, and live, I think," a local doctor spoke up. "We believe he'll come through all right——"

"Oh, yes, he'll be all right," said Major Nettleton hastily. "Morton, as far as you——"

"What happened?" I interrupted rudely. "Wasn't there a crack-up——"

"Yes, indeed!" nodded the major, and proceeded to tell me all he knew.

It seems that the hail had finally turned to snow. Sparrow, unable to see well enough to guide the ship anywhere or pick a field, had finally come down in desperation when he felt himself losing consciousness. He had made a beautiful landing, according to the expert testimony of the major, and the ship, according to the tracks in the snow, had rolled a hundred feet before striking a ditch hidden by the snow. Finally I wormed the information out of him that Sparrow's condition was grave.

"He wasn't in good shape to stand the exposure," the medico told me.

Too much drinking, I thought to myself. But what a colossal feat Sparrow had performed!

"Morton, there are about twenty reporters waiting to see you. Do you want to interview them?" inquired the major.

"How come?" I asked in total astonishment. "How big a town is this? By the way, where am I?"

"In the hospital at Laurelsburg, Ohio," grinned Nettleton.

Then he went on to explain the presence of so many reporters. Seems that a very wealthy and nationally prominent politician had been murdered by his good-looking young housekeeper two days before, right there in Laurelsburg. Feature men and sob-sisters were there from New York and Chicago papers, as well as more obscure points in between like Detroit and Cincinnati and Buffalo. I seen my duty and I done it, which is probably the remark the housekeeper made after she bumped the old boy off.

I told those newspaper boys plenty—and I didn't exaggerate, either. I will flatter myself that I lost nothing of the story. There were a number of good angles—that Martin had roared along for over an hour, like an ice-encased fantom of the storm, seeking a landing-place and thrilling a dozen different towns. I told them that no pen could exaggerate his achievement. I likewise went into detail about his service, his decoration, etc. After they had left I sent a telegram to Langham Field, and another to Washington for no good reason, and that last wire cost me twenty-two dollars and forty cents, but it was a good yarn of the thing. I knew that General Mallory, an adroit publicity man where popularizing his tiny but beloved service is concerned, would do the rest.

Well, the yarns were gorgeous. They started coming in the next day, and I read 'em for hours with a satisfied smirk on my face but gnawing anxiety over Sparrow spoiling my complete happiness. Fighting for his life there in the hospital helped out the story—but it was —— on me.

Mallory and other men gave out interviews, the A. P. sent out a great story from Washington, undoubtedly stimulated by Mallory, and the feature men turned themselves loose. As for the sob-sisters, they drooled all over the place. His modesty in never wearing his decoration, the beautiful landing, the irony of fate—all were there.

A day later Nettleton came in to tell me that Sparrow was all right, but that three of his toes and one finger had been amputated. I presume they did that some time before, and didn't want to tell me. The announcement kept the story going beautifully, which was the only good thing about it.

"That means he gets retired immediately, does it not?" I asked Nettleton.

The gray-haired flight surgeon nodded.

"Absolutely—no other possibility."

"Can I see him to-day, as you said?" I inquired.

"Sure thing—right away," he replied, and I was hoisted in a wheel-chair. I got a pretty nasty ankle out of the final wreck, and could not walk as yet.

A nurse wheeled me into Sparrow's room. He was flat on his back, and his face was a mass of bandages from which puffed eyes looked forth at me and smiled.

"What happened to your face?" was my first question.

"Still pretty raw from the hail!" he said in a muffled voice.

Bright slits of eyes met mine steadily as as he went on:

"Jim, I didn't turn on that throttle. It sprung on! I don't know how—but you know I wouldn't lie about it——"

"Of course—just one of those accidents," I assured him. "No harm done—I'll still have the arm. It was a nice piece of flying you did, Sparrow, even if I don't remember much of it. How did you make that take-off and find this town and stand that hail?"

"God only knows!" he whispered huskily. "I can't remember. Went wild, I guess. I'll never forget finding you down under there, bleeding like a stuck pig and dead to the world."

We talked on for a half-hour, all that they would allow us. He was still very weak, and I wasn't so chipper. I had lost a lot of blood, they told me. I could see that Sparrow's flying achievement had been completely forgotten by him, and that he was brooding over the fact that he had been in the cock-pit when that throttle went on. He was holding himself responsible for all that had happened. I rose in my wrath, took the bull by the horns, struck while the iron was hot, took time by the forelock, and did my stuff.

"Listen here, you double-dyed idiot!" I raved, as gently as a South Sea hurricane. "You've got into the habit of thinking yourself no good so thoroughly that you're getting cracked on the subject. You make me so —— mad laying there looking like a sick calf that I could cheerfully file you down to fit the size of your brain, which would make you invisible to the naked eye.

"My injury, which doesn't amount to a nickel, was unavoidable. Then you saved my darn fool life about three times over, and accomplished the best single bit of flying I ever heard about. The take-off was a feat in itself, the landing was a miracle, and fighting that storm the way you did was something to write home about! You've been trying all your life to prove that you could do something—and when you come through you haven't got the sense to realize it! No wonder you never hit the ball before this—you're so dumb that you'd be waiting for the next pitch while the ball you'd hit was floating over the fence! You're a hero, you crazy, nervy, brainless, marvelous dub! If you don't believe, take a look at these papers with your best eye!"

The top paper of the heap was a Cincinnati sheet, and a two-column head, it was an evening paper, said—

"AIR HERO FIGHTING FOR LIFE AFTER FIGHT WITH STORM TO SAVE FRIEND"

The other streamers worked up from there. Mallory and I between us, with the connivance of that sporty gang of news hounds, had done the trick. And the stories! Can you imagine what a good sob-sister would do with that angle about covering me with his own coat?

He was a country-wide hero, because a dame in Laurelsburg had taken advantage of the open season on husbands and sweethearts, taken out a license and popped her papa in the gizzard with a .45. After reading millions of words about himself, being snapped for the movie weeklies, reading messages of congratulation which included everything from a wire sent by the President of the United States and Commander in Chief of the Armies thereof down to a post-card from one Zebediah Hopkins, a shoemaker of Plymouth, Sparrow finally suspected that perhaps maybe he might have possibly come close to nearly accomplishing an almost creditable job.

THE day he left for Walter Reed Hospital in Washington preparatory to retiring with an income of a hundred odd dollars a month for life I decided to get out of the army. I was fed up with flying, restless, and the bottoms of my feet were itching. And I'll say this, too—it seemed to me that there was no reason for me to stay. Once again the old stuff—I had fought Sparrow's battle with him, mentally, so long that his success seemed to have taken away my incentive for living as I had for the last four years.

I resigned, took a whirl at the California oil-fields, made myself a little money, got a job through Jerry Gascom flying in China teaching their army aviators, and finally drifted back to the States just a little while ago. I saw Sparrow in Boston.

No, he didn't turn into a world-beater, trim all the financiers of the country out of their last nickel, become mayor of the town, marry the most beautiful girl in the world, and get the nomination for President. But apparently his experience, plus the notoriety, doubtless, had given him self-confidence. Being somebody—deferred to and admired—had acted like a tonic. Of course, he dropped into comparative obscurity within a month after the thing happened, but in his set around Boston he's still quite a fellow.

Above all is that self-confidence. He believes he can do something now. And he's doing it. He's got a five thousand dollar job—political appointment as some kind of an inspector—and he's holding it down in good shape. He's happy, at ease, and looks and acts as if wholesomely sure of himself.

He's now on the road. He'll get married, have children, live contentedly in Massachusetts, and die as "our esteemed fellow-citizen, Mr. Jethro Morse."

I said "live contentedly," you notice. That takes the curse off the program outlined above. Some day, I presume, I'll be hoboing toward Boston to borrow money or panhandle a meal from him.

And that's that.

THE BIRTH OF GLOBE, ARIZONA

by E. E. Harriman

IN 1873 the San Carlos Indian Agency had just been established. A man named Tom Miner told Governor Safford that he had found placer gold and the governor headed a party of fifty men to locate the new diggings. They camped where Globe now stands, for sixty days, and twin brothers Bob and Dave Anderson, discovered and staked two claims, the Globe and Globe Ledge. These are now the heart of the O. D. Mine.

This was the beginning of Globe. Other men came and staked the country around the original claims. They began to ship silver ore and they paid Ben Parks one hundred dollars a ton to haul it out to Silver City, New Mexico, by bull teams.

Many heroic tales are related of Globe and its environment, but none more heroic than that told of Felix Knox. He had been drummer in the 15th U. S. Infantry at Gettysburg, champion of his division. He had married in Arizona, after leaving the army. The Apaches went on the warpath and Knox hitched a team to a wagon, put his wife and her young brother in it and started for town.

The Apaches sighted them and pursued. Knox saw that they would overtake the wagon shortly, unless checked. Racing the fast-tiring team until he came to a place where the road was flanked on one side by a high riverbank and on the other by rough, rocky ridges over which the savages could make little headway, he gave the reins to the youth and told him to flog the horses. Then he jumped.

Rifle in hand and his revolver out and ready, he lay on his face and received the savage onslaught. Firing fast and with precision, he held them back until the running team had gained enough distance to be safe. When the Apache ponies trampled the body of Felix Knox, his wife and her brother were within sight of town and men were out to meet them, bearing ready rifles for their protection.

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

THAT Florida reptile got all classified and labeled, didn't he? Anyhow here's a reptile from Texas:

Brownsville, Texas.

Re the unclassified reptile plowed up in Florida, possibly the following definition by Webster refers to the same animal:

"Geck'o, pronounced gĕko, so called from the sound uttered by the animal. Any lizard of the family Geckonidæ. The typical geckos are small, more or less nocturnal, animals with large eyes and vertical elliptical pupils. Their vertebrae are ampicoelous and their toes are generally expanded and furnished with adhesive disks, by which they can run over walls and ceilings. They are numerous in most warm countries, a few species are found in southern Europe and one in Florida. Though often considered poisonous, they are absolutely harmless and are useful in destroying insects."

The description of the animal in Florida is identical with one that was killed recently by my next door neighbor here and was classified by Mr. W. A. (Snake) King, a world renowned dealer in wild animals and reptiles, and I happened to remember the name he called it.

With kindest wishes to all of those who gather around the Camp-Fire.—A. S. LANIER.

FROM Thomas Topham something on the facts from which was drawn his story in this issue:

Los Angeles.

Hipolito's adventure, in part, comes perilously near being true. I knew him under his real name, of Pedro Morales, a happy, go-lucky sort of Mex whose wife actually decided she needed a cow. Pedro went into Mexicali to buy the cow, got beautifully stewed, lost his money gambling, and then decided he had to have a cow if it disrupted Lower California. In the dark night he sneaked into a ranch and got into a corral where they were feeding some large steers for market, and, being exceedingly drunk, escorted out a steer and rode it home.

When he came over to us on an adjoining ranch to be sewed up he had eight large cuts on his head and face, and swore his wife used an ax on him. We didn't doubt it. Poor Pedro never went home and was later shot when he turned pearl pirate in the Gulf of California. He thought he had an easy thing of it one day and held up a boat load of

Mexican soldiers disguised as pearl fishers. They filled him so full of lead that they used him for an anchor.—Thomas Topham.

AT LEAST two Panamanian Kangaroos have found each other. Here's to a big all-round reunion! And already here's one of our Camp-Fire Station Keepers with a latch-string offering a particular welcome to any old T. T.

Vallejo, California.

A word to "H" in *Adventure*, who is inquiring for some Panamanian Kangaroos. Some time ago I made the same plea, for I am in accord with "H" that were it not for the Kangaroos there would be no Canal. What "H" said about his joining the Roos, well, I had the pleasure of being one of the original charter members of Empire Court No. 1, with Yard Master Wirtz as judge.

Ball and myself always presided at the refreshment counter, where the whole bill-of-fare could be had. No doubt of it the writer is the guilty one sending "H" to his four days of rest in the accident ward, but remember "OPTIMUS EST QUI OPTIMA," so comrade "H," old timer, drop me a line and we'll renew old times.—Conrad A. Engesser, Camp-Fire 113, Box 364, Vallejo, Calif.

P. S. You have my permission to publish this so that any old T. T. may know where the latch-string is out.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, John Dorman rises to introduce himself. What he says should have accompanied one of his stories in an earlier issue, but something went wrong (probably my fault) and anyhow it's just as welcome here:

Cortez, Florida.

Brothers of *Adventure's* Camp-Fire: I beg that for once you will forget the time-honored custom which demands that a youth sit silent in a council of his elders—I can't forbear the pleasure of presenting myself to you. Compared to the men who from time to time arise to introduce themselves to you my years are very few, my travels scant, and my adventures almost non-existent. So far life has chosen to smooth the way for me. Whenever I have arisen, girded my loins with a pistol or two and gone out to seek adventure it has faded long ere I arrived.

As, for instance, I enlisted in the Army during the late war as soon as my tender years would permit. I drilled more or less faithfully, received overseas equipment—and then somebody stopped the War! So I spent some ten months after the armistice in a dreary camp in old Virginia (Camp Eustis), busy with such duties as riding a motorcycle and running a supply office. I returned home from the Army so late that I couldn't even edge in on the glamour a returning hero should receive. By the time I became an ex-soldier they had long since ceased being heroes, in fact, and had become a problem!

I REMEMBER another occasion, too, when I joined myself to the Pennsylvania railroad as a strike guard, armed with two huge pistols. A few short hours before I would have embarked for Saginaw, Michigan, where fur was flying in abundance, the strike was called off. So it happens that about the only adventures I've managed to accomplish have been the commonplace ones of drifting to some new town, going broke and going to work at the first available occupation.

For some two of my twenty-four years I've been in the newspaper game. During the others I've found time to be almost everything in the line of work. Salesman, floorwalker, taxi-driver, waiter, plumber's assistant, roofer, painter, rough (very rough!) carpenter, as well as bookkeeper, stenographer and assistant teller. Laborer on more than one occasion and in more than one place, too.

In fact, as I write this there are still scars and callouses on my hands derived from the last period of financial depression, over at Miami, where I built scaffold for bricklayers! News-writing jobs do not blossom as freely in the south as they do in the east and north.

I DID get in two years of college immediately after being discharged from the Army. Hadn't been out of O. D's a week, in fact, before I was enrolled at Junior College, Grand Rapids, Michigan—a very young offspring of the University of Michigan. Two years convinced me that Bob Ingersoll was right when he said that college is a mill which polishes pebbles and dulls diamonds. Not wanting to be dulled, I quit to become more or less of a bum.

'Twas in the year after I left college that I wrote a novel, said book being worked upon spasmodically in several places. When finished it was very short and very worthless. I sent it to three publishers, who returned it with expressions of undying regret that it was so very literary that the public wouldn't like it. Of course, they said, if I wished to subsidize the publication—I didn't! Exit novel by the fire route.

MY WRITING career has been hampered a great deal by an accident which befell me in my sixteenth year. Acting on the advice of a high school teacher I sent a short story I wrote to a magazine. They bought it! Feature it, my first story sold on its first trip out! My brothers of the bleeding stylus will know what that would mean to a child of sixteen winters! But it was many a year before my ego subsided sufficiently to allow me to sell another one. Hundreds of yarns I wrote, mailed out a time or two, and burned!

Shortly after the novel episode I broke into the newspaper game *via* the *Morning Sun* of Baltimore, after ranging through several states in quest of a job of that nature.

My travels, I regret to state, have so far been bounded by the Mississippi, the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic, and the St. Lawrence Valley, with the exception of a few brief expeditions beyond those boundaries. Counting my Army "career," I've spent some four years knocking around within this area without ever seeming able to break away definitely—milling around like a pup on a chain, I've often thought, doing a great deal of traveling without getting anywhere.

In spite of the Mexican setting hinted at in "The House of the Broken Poignard," I have yet to see Mexico. Twice I've started for there but something always interferes to stop me. I had intended drifting down that way this Summer—then came an offer from a Michigan paper to spend the Summer doing feature stuff for them, just wandering about the State and writing more or less what I please. Salary and expenses, of course, and the salary one which still has my breath coming in short pants! Since I was born in Michigan I naturally know nothing much of it, having preferred to do my traveling farther afield. Opportunities to travel leisurely and comfortably at some one else's expense being not very numerous with me, I quite naturally accepted.

However, a close observer will notice that in the story mentioned above I've studiously refrained from any description of country. I've encountered Mexicans here and there—even have worked a gang of Mexican laborers—and I've met a number of Spaniards and Cubans. So I have at least a little excuse for attempting to deal with the Spanish temperament. Incidentally, the yarn has no basis of fact.

Thus endeth the adventures to date of our young hero. Adventures in contentment would come a great deal nearer describing them than any other phrase I know of.

If I can be of any service to the watchers or the warders of *Adventure's* Fire, I shall be only too glad to serve you. A letter sent to me at Cedar Springs, Michigan, will always reach me some time. —JOHN DORMAN.

HERE is a later letter from Mr. Dorman, by way of correction in the light of events:

There is a correction which should be made in the autobiography accompanying "The House of the Broken Poignard." Since sending it in my plans have been changed for me. I wrote that I would spend the Summer as a traveling staff member of a Michigan paper. The M. E. who hired me is now out himself. Therefore I drift westward just to see what will happen.—JOHN DORMAN.

AS THIS letter has lain in our cache since January, 1923, it's too late to reach this comrade at the address given, though it might possibly reach him if forwarded. Anyhow he shows himself the right breed for our Camp-Fire.

Rupert,Idaho.

Rise up to remark I've read *Adventure* since the first issue, barring a few I've had to miss when off on a long quest for the yellow stuff that makes the world go, financially.

HAVE a little information about arctic foxes for our brother from West Brighton, S. I., New York, if he wants it. Got back from North Siberia a little over a year ago and have not written about the trip for several reasons, but the most weighty one was that I want to make another trip before I spread too much publicity on that section of the world. Have some good data on Siberia, N. W. from East Cape to Cape North and beyond, as I spent two years there. Had the honor of being Capt. Amunsen's guest for about six weeks when he was frozen in at Cape Serdze, Winter 1920-1.

Was hoping to get away last Summer but deal fell through and now I'm going to make another try. Was a member of the cruise of the *Casco* and one of the last to get back.

Have some interesting experiences to relate when I get confident I can write them intelligently.

Any one asking information on Siberia, N. W. of East Cape, you can refer to me for about sixty days or a little more at address below and I'll answer as promptly as I can, although mail may have to be forwarded to me, as I'm on the move all the time.—ALBIN L. JOHNSON.

FROM an old-timer comrade, now associate editor of *The Oil Age*, who has seen quite a good deal of this country of ours:

Los Angeles, California.

I read the interesting, instructive and at times bizarre stories in the Camp-Fire department, and at times have a slight writers' itch to butt in. It is etiquette, I guess, reckon and allow, to let you all sabe who I am.

BORN at Grassy Hollow, or Turkey Run—now the edge of Bethel, Conn., where at one time about all the hats of the country were made—the last day of December, 1852, it is evident I have encountered a few Winters and Summers. When I was four years old my father moved to Newago, Mich., then an Indian reservation, with several sawmills. Then he moved to Ottawa, Ill., then out to where Streator now is, and in 1865 to western Iowa—Shelby County, when I was 13 years old.

The first winter I projected with strychnin until I learned how to poison coyotes. Strychnin, by the way, or its effects, is little understood. I poisoned 25 coyotes and collected $3 bounty on the connected ears of 24 of 'em, his relatives having chewed off the ears of the 25th in getting the meat; also $1 for each pelt. In my coyote-poisoning rambles I accidentally poisoned a big otter that had evaded all my efforts to trap him; but, a snow coming on that covered him two months before I found him, his pelt was worthless. It would have sold for $20 when prime.

SPEAKING about the human ability to eat, I smashed the quail-a-day-for-thirty-days stunt into so many fragments it is a joke. The prairies were literally alive with prairie-chickens, and mighty fine eating too. Father and I killed them daily and mother cooked them in every conceivable form to vary the monotony, for we had them morning, noon and night. I can truthfully say I ate one to three prairie-chickens every day for six months, and could do it now if the birds were obtainable. The best way to cook a prairie-chicken—or almost any other wild fowl, for that matter—is to skin it and fry the breast in butter, if a young bird, as the breast is about all there is to wild fowl, and they never get fat like tame fowls. We boys, when we moved into the little village that served as county-seat, had our Easter frolics by finding prairie-chicken nests—sometimes by burning the grass—and cooking the eggs with buffalo "chips," with which the surface was covered.

It is interesting to know that prairie-chickens, grouse, are untamable. I have put the eggs under a tame hen, but the minute the chick is out of the shell he is gone like a flash; tame hens—at least all I ever tried—will have no truck with a prairie-chick, pecking them away. I have even had the chicks in the kitchen for warmth and safety, but never succeeded in keeping one. I have tamed sandhill cranes, ducks and other wild birds, and even tried to gentle a coyote two-thirds grown, losing the cuticle off the end of my nose while trying to stare him into subjection by concentrated eye-power. I finally killed the derned brute and collected $2 bounty.

WITH a bench-legged dog I have killed hundreds of snakes, including rattlers, one joint or glass snake, spreading adders, hoop-snakes and every variety that existed in Illinois and Iowa. When sixteen I was bitten by a rattlesnake and was the worst-scared kid ever, being bitten through a thin calfskin boot right on the big toe. The rattler was so mad he slammed one fang clear to the hilt, and it hurt bad and bled freely. While out on the prairie to get my saddle mare for Sunday a prairie-chicken flew up from a gopher-mound, in August, which was strange. When I got to the gopher-hill there lay Mr. Rattler. I slammed him with the bridle, but he started down a squirrel-hole so I stepped on him close to the hole and was trying to catch the tail and snap his head off, as I had done at times. While I was trying to get the wiggling tail the head end came out of the hole and got me.

A boy with me lent me his horse and I galloped a mile to town and told the druggist what had happened. He mixed up alcohol into a kind of bitters they called squint-essence of squaw-root and sold it on the sly. I had never tasted whisky or intoxicating liquor and the fiery stuff was hard to swallow. I took home a quart and told mother. After recovering from the spasm she sent for father at the store, who came home immediately. I began to feel skittish at the beginning of my first "souse" and told them none of the poison had struck the flesh for no swelling appeared, and I knew, from previous experiments with and dissections of rattlesnakes, that the drop of poison had squirted on the boot before the fang entered the flesh, as sometimes happens when the snake gets plumb mad and excited, as this one was.

Two weeks afterward, on another horse-hunt, I found the same snake sunning on the same gopher-hill and killed him. I carried the eight rattles and a button in my pocket till they wore out. I had never been afraid of snakes up to that time, but even after all these years snakes are repulsive things to me and the rustling of dry grass, slightly resembling the metallic sound of a snake's rattle, will send shivers chasing up and down my spine. But that was certainly a great jag I accumulated, with father and mother as bartenders.

I have for many years been traveling over the oil-fields of the United States, Mexico and Canada, in wild country frequently, walking and driving and camping out, but I can truthfully say that since I was bitten I have never seen to exceed nine live rattlesnakes on their native ranges. They are plentiful in the sagebrush and cactus deserts, which I have traversed from Canada to southwestern Mexico, but they do not show up when I'm around, which pleases me plenty.

MY first experience with a bucking bronc was fortunate, for the first jump he made the knack came to me instantly, otherwise there would have been no other bucks for me, and I could always stay aboard unless the brute fell over backward, which they sometimes do, when the proper thing for the rider is to unload. Riding tough broncs seems to me to have provided some of the exhilaration for frontier boyhood now enjoyed by aviators. I have no urge now to tackle airplanes, but if they had happened during the prime of my Wild West bronc-busting days I would have been tickled, having also been a high diver and toboggan artist of some repute. Now, having had twelve holes cut into my torso trying to bail out the pus following a ruptured and removed gall-bladder, the muscular turns and twists necessary to stick with a bucking pony or to make a 40-foot dive into water would split the abdominal cuticle already badly sliced. The surgeons said I couldn't survive, but I beat it after five months in the hospital, and can still do some rough traveling in the deserts.

WHEN I was sixteen years old a country editor came to the Iowa county-seat where we lived and I became a printer's devil, being a sure-shot speller and reader. That's fifty-four years ago this July, and I'm still reading proof and writing oil news and statistics for an oil trade magazine here in Los Angeles, having spent twenty-one years in the oil fields. For thirty-five years I was a journeyman printer, with spells of reporting and office editing on morning, evening, weekly and monthly papers and magazines, mostly West and South, and for six years during the Cleveland-Harrison alternations I was just a hobo printer looking for work from Ohio to the Arizona desert, the longest period I worked in any shop being four months. I belonged to the typographical union and could nearly always ride freight trains on my traveling-card, but occasionally had hard luck. It was certainly fierce hardship, but I was strong, looked the world in the face and cheerfully invited everybody to take a running jump to —— and gone when they got unnecessarily gay and presumed on my misfortune. Down in Arkansaw I even had to tell a hobo winter camp where to head in when they objected to my dignity and stuckuppityness. If a fellow don't get hard-boiled at times he's off the earth sure as shootin'.—H. L. WOOD.

MANY of our original cover paintings are for sale to the highest bidder. No bid of less than ten dollars per cover considered. Covers are sent express collect one month after they appear on news-stands.

IN ACCORDANCE with Camp-Fire custom Herman Petersen rises to introduce himself.

And now you ask me to do a thing that is really difficult—stand up in the blazing light of Camp-Fire. I wasn't hailed with the appearance of my first yarn and it was with a great sigh of relief that I sneaked by in the dark. I did feel rather guilty, but I did go by.

Now I am hailed, and, if for tonight the fire will be built of driftwood on a coral beach, if the background will be black jungle with some leaning palms stood black silhouettes against a tropic sky washed with a climbing, terrible, great yellow moon, if the night will be hushed to the trade wind's sigh and the moaning of the coral bar—then for just a moment I can hold my knees together and stand up.

I was born here in Utica a few years ago. The home dooryard was fairly large, but I managed to get over the boundaries once or twice. Just how much good it all did me—I can't say. I can say that I learned to fear four things: snakes, spiders, red-headed women and bootleg whiskey. I wore a private's uniform for two years during the war. So far as I'm concerned peace hasn't been declared as yet. I'm married. I've already made one remark about red hair. *Verbum sat sapienti.*

I write stories because the next best thing I do is sleep. I suppose I really should sleep more, but, then, one can't spend *all* one's time in bed. An overdose always gives me a headache. Then I get up and write—and pass the ache along to some one else.—HERMAN PETERSEN.

ANSWERING this comrade's question at the end of his letter is a large order. I might suggest that as a starter we might defeat at least nine-tenths of the professional politicians who are candidates for re-election. Regardless of party. Before they put the lid back on we had a large glimpse of the utter corruption resulting from party rule and from the voters' blind loyalty to party instead of country. The only difference between the two old parties is that one has and the other wants to get.

This is no argument for any third party, or any fourth or fifth party. If one of them gets power it will undoubtedly use it for party and personal purposes just as the others have done. The point is to break the exaggerated power of all political parties, to cast out most of those who have been living off politics and to drive home the point that the people *can* rule if sufficiently aroused. That will be at least a step toward voting for issues and men instead of for machines and empty platforms.

Waldport, Oregon.

I am a pioneer but am getting old and childish and can not understand things like I could in my youth. For instance I notice in the papers that several societies have declared themselves in favor of the anti-gun-carrying law. I wonder why such people are at large. Why not handcuff and gag all the honest people whenever they leave home?

You doubtless remember a story in *Adventure* about a guy from India who hypnotized the people and made them believe they were animals, with disastrous results. It seems to me, probably because I am so old I can not think clearly, that some one has pulled that stunt on our politicians and leaders of the people.

A CASE in point is the terrible sentences dealt out to narcotic peddlers. This crime is worse than treason insomuch that it is an offense against humanity as well as the State. When one of these unfortunates is caught and convicted, which is sure unless he has too much money, political pull, influential friends or pleasing female accomplices, he is sometimes sentenced to as much as ten months in jail with chance of parole, time off for good behavior, and such and other inventions as tend to the protection of society.

Holy Moses! Are we civilized? Or is the slime that covered the snout of the first worm which crawled from the primeval sea still dripping from our whiskers? What can we do to better conditions? Not what shall we do. The common people, ninety per cent. of whom are law abiding and willing to do anything in their power to better conditions, are hampered by lack of knowledge to direct their energies and, what is worse, lack of confidence in their would-be teachers and in themselves.—J. GASNOLD WATSON.

A DEFENSE of the Indian, and an indictment of the whites:

College Hill, Cincinnati, Ohio.

This letter is written in reply to that of Mr. Baker who states that he would like to argue the Indian question.

AT THE out-set I want to state that I believe the Indian has been the victim of the greatest injustice ever perpetrated by a nation. I say that the Indian was justified in his massacres; I say that the horrible tortures and brutality that he perpetrated were justified. Wait. Let's understand that word "justify." I do not mean justified in the sense that we could apply it to a civilized people; the Indian learned torturing from the white man as he learned all of his other vices from the white man. Read: Volume 22, page 505, "Historians History of the World."

I am going to make this letter as short as I can; and in so doing will not go into details, but if there is any question about the facts as I state them I shall be glad to go into the matter further. I know the Indian fairly well, not only his features, his stoical out-look upon the world; but I believe I know just a little about what is in his heart. Something that few of his critics have ever learned.

MY PEOPLE came to America in 1629 and we've been here ever since. In 1855 some of my people were massacred in the White River Valley; at other times and at other places they have felt the barbarity of the Indian. But, does Mr. Baker stop and consider just what was the cause of the Indians' barbarity? It can be answered in one sentence. The white man's greed for gold. He taught the Indian to lie, to cheat, to steal and he capped it all by stealing everything the Indian owned. He sent him into the waste land of America —Oklahoma, to die. The United States Government made promises to the Indian only to break them. Treaties were scraps of paper, nothing more. Read the treaty of 1835. In part it reads—

"The United States also agree to remove the Cherokees to their new homes and to subsist them one year after their arrival and that a sufficient number of steamboats, barges, wagons shall be furnished to remove them comfortably and so as not to endanger their health."

How was that treaty carried out? They lined them up and marched them; and many died on the way, old, young, sick and well.

THE Indian fought in the only way that he knew how to fight for freedom; and the white man fought him—why? For the land that was the Indian's birth-right; and might was right.

You don't need to go back in history to see the white man's lying, cheating injustice to the Indian; go to Oklahoma, stop off at Pawhuska, go to Gore go out in the hills among the Cherokee. Go to one of their dances on the Redbird farm located on the Illinois River, talk to one of the old Indians and if you don't change your opinion after listening to him you're hard to change. Not that he is going to pour out the great injustice of the white man; he won't, but you'll learn something of the Indian beneath the skin, something that you don't learn in ten-cent thrillers and program "westerns." Go to Arizona. Study the import of the Bursum bill that was introduced in Congress. Go to Mexico and study the Yaqui and then learn his history.

THE Indian was uneducated, uncivilized and what he did he did because he thought he could save his country. Patrick Henry cried, "Give me liberty or give me death." A nation applauds that kind of sentiment. The Indian didn't say it, he felt it and carried out his feelings. Did the Indian kill and torture because he loved it for its own sake?

Let us compare him with more modern civilized nations. Were the deeds of the uncivilized, uneducated Indians more barbarous than those of the ultra-civilized during the war? When you read of the Spanish Inquisition and then consider the Indian and his deeds—what do you say?

When the Indians fought for the protection of their country it was called a massacre; when the white man fought the Indians, taking away his country—it was a battle. Don't imagine that the white man refrained from killing women and children—"Nits breeds lice"—that was their defense.

MY GRANDFATHER moved from Ohio to Kansas in 1866. My father grew up in the West and Southwest and knew the Indian well and he has always said that an Indian's word was better than a white man's bond. I've lived among the Indians, I've studied them a bit and I've read history and I've gathered what I could from them.

Indians were good and bad; but no matter how bad, we can not excuse the injustice of the white man on that plea. In the world war the Indian fought for the United States—and the Indian is not a citizen; 85% of them volunteered.

Read the American Declaration of Independence and the preamble of the Constitution and then apply the principles of those two instruments to your judgment of the Indian and his relation to the United States and the Government's treatment of him.

THE Civil War made the negro a citizen, gave him the right to vote and made him the equal of a white man—that's his view—negroes who had been slaves of the Cherokee Indian in Oklahoma were given land far better than that given to the Cherokee and to-day while those negroes (rather their descendants) roll in luxury, own valuable homes in Muskogee and elsewhere, the Cherokee nation dies of poverty and tuberculosis on their rock-strewn farms along the Illinois.

Well, those who sigh for the prophet's paradise to come believe that every one will get justice in the next world—perhaps the Indian will get his there, don't look as though there is much chance of him getting it here. Just imagine what would happen if the Indian office were done away with, if the Indian were allowed to act for himself without a Government paid guardian (the Indian furnishes the money). What would happen to Pawhuska if the Indian was running things in the Osage Nation?—JOHN PAUL JONES.

HERE is the other side of one phase of the case, presented by E. E. Harriman.

Los Angeles, California.

A favorite amusement of a certain class is abusing the whites. A squawman takes his favorite savage and compares him to the white, carefully selecting some beastly specimen of the latter race. Some man with a large proportion of the black pigment in his skin will hold up some heroic personage of his own race, comparing him with Legree or some modern degenerate. Always the white race is judged through its worst specimens, in comparison with the best afforded in colors. It makes me tired. My weariness is progressive.

Scores of times have I heard the white accused of teaching his iniquity to the blameless red man—and the black—in our country. I would like to present a few facts, bearing on this claim.

FIRST, I wish to state that I have no defense to offer for the many instances wherein degenerate, greedy, conscienceless whites have robbed, maltreated and abused the Indian and negro. Had I my will in such cases as where the agent fixed three weeks in which the tribe might file on lands, in his office, and then went off on a hunt and was gone until the allotted time had expired, letting his friends come in and grab the best land, he would be hanged.

But here is the case as it stands—the white is judged by such men as this one and we are asked to judge the Indian by exceptional tribesmen, like Chief Joseph. It is as if the Greek should compare Plato with Rome's disgrace—Caligula. Or Rome should set up the life of Tarquinius Superbus in comparison with that of a Greek trader on the Congo. It is neither fair nor sensible.

Little Crow was a beast in his cruel actions. He killed his six brothers in order to seize the position as chief. He started war on the white population of Minnesota in order to cement his hold on the Sioux nation, as war chief. But has his devilish brutality taken any of the shine off the records of Chaska and Wabashaw, who strenuously opposed his action and later established Friendly Camp?

Yet we are daily asked to damn all white men because certain low characters have been brutal and politicians have proved scoundrels. I object. The cards have been stacked against the white.

HUNDREDS of times I have heard it said, and read it, that Indians never knew the flavor of alcohol until the whites brought rum. Bosh! A loud and emphatic bosh! Home-brew was known and used among tribes of aborigines before Columbus, before Lief Ericson, before the Welsh adventurers sighted America.

In practically all aboriginal tribes of the temperate and torrid zones this has been true. The Apache made his brew from the heart of the sotol yucca and doctored it up with a certain root, found in the mountains. This root, looking like a parsnip, was macerated and boiled in the distilled liquor. It carried maddening qualities.

A good drink of this would make a Quaker hit Battling Siki in the nose. Two drinks would cause a rabbit to spit in the eye of a mad coyote. A pint carried enough —— to induce murder, rape, arson, mayhem, and other kindred disportings of a cheerful soul.

Just as marihuana weed (*nicotania glauca*) induces homicidal lust, so this mild drink produces all sorts of criminal acts. Under the influence of either, the user becomes insensible to danger, remorse or decency. That is why they are loved and used by certain people on both sides of the Mexican border.

Chastity of aboriginal women and continency of the men, are so often mentioned in laudatory sentences. No pagan was ever nasty or indecent, according to some. Aboriginal perfection, until seduced by lustful whites, is the song I hear quite often. Let us see.

THE first tenet of aboriginal warfare has always been the free use and abuse of captive women. The existence of marital ties were dependent upon the whim of one side or the other. In African tribes the man could divorce a wife with a sentence. In America the squaw could bargain openly with another man, before the face of her husband, and swap men at will. Even our squawmen admit this.

The first whites to land on the Pacific coast found sodomy a common practice among the aborigines there. Right here, at Los Angeles, was a colony of Indians practicing this abomination.

And yet they want us to believe the aborigine immaculate and the white the spawn of ——.

I ask for a square deal. I object to this method of comparison, where invariably the best redman is pitted against the worst white. I have listened to it until I am weary unto the point of fighting.

LISTEN—one squawman declares his tribe the best ever. No finer men ever stepped than his red brothers. Then along comes a second squawman, from another tribe. His associates were immeasurably superior to the first tribe. He tells me just wherein the first tribe showed itself beastly. He details filthy habits, untrustworthy acts, fiendish impulses, general cussedness, on their part. He lauds his own.

Back comes number one with proof, to his own mind, that his people surpassed the second tribe infinitely. Both men can mention data in proof of their contention. Both assume that they have the goods on the opposition and proceed to prove their contemptible character.

Now what are you going to do, when each proves his case so well? What can you do but believe they are both right?

Here is what I do. I believe there have been, and always will be, some good, some bad, in every people. I believe there are both justice and injustice in every land and every tribe.

BUT no man on earth can make me believe that matters that have come under my own observation, wherein certain savages committed such atrocious acts as beating out the brains of unweaned babes, braining old women, raping and torturing to death young girls, are all dreams.

I saw Mrs. Baker in my own home, drenched with the blood of her husband, after he had practised his belief that if one treated an Indian kindly and generously he would always be safe with them. Shot to death, in the back, while he was reaching after the tobacco a sub-chief asked for, after having fed that chief and his men many times, after giving them clothing, blankets, powder, sugar, flour, potatoes, all sorts of things. After three years of uniform kindness to Sioux.

GEORGE SPENCER, at Red Cloud Agency, shot through with five balls, saw an Indian whom he had fed and housed through two Winters, do his utmost to kill his benefactor. "An Indian never forgets a favor." No?

The first man killed in the war of 1862 was a man who had worn the Indian dress, adopted Indian customs, lived with the Sioux seven years and spent nearly all his modest fortune in providing for the unfortunate among them. And the squaws mutilated him terribly.

I could fill ten pages with such instances.

Now why not admit that now and then there are bad Indians? The Indians themselves have admitted it often. Why should white men try to disprove it? I ask justice for my people, not wholesale condemnation.—E. E. HARRIMAN.

To me it is not a question of whether the whites are or were better or worse than the redmen. Each race has its virtues and its vices. Who, after all, is sufficiently a god, to judge between them? Obviously it is unfair and futile, as Mr. Harriman says, to judge from examples here and there. Probably none of us know the Indians in general better than Hugh Pendexter, yet I doubt his attempting to say which race is the better. By what standards would one judge? Ours? That is hardly fair. Even if it were, then by our standards *when?* Is the Indian the same by white standards three centuries ago? In three centuries from now will not white standards change still more?

This phase of the argument seems a futile one. But, by our own standards, which race was right in the struggle between them And our own standards, how good are they?

MAYBE Mr. Jones is a bit partizan at times, but if his points and a thousand more points were so sound and just that no one could possibly refute them, all of them at once would be swept away by the practical argument all superior people's use to justify subjecting, robbing or exterminating inferior peoples. This argument is that civilization must advance, that progress demands that the land of inferior races should be taken by superior races for development.

This is the "practical" argument. Let us adopt the "practical" ground entirely, abandoning any test by moral standards of any kind, most of all abandoning any consideration for the Christian religion. We have to, in fact, for the essence of Christianity is the Golden Rule and it would strain even the most "practical" casuist to reconcile robbing and exterminating with the Golden Rule. The "practical" argument is that, while such things may not be Christian, we have to and should do them anyhow—for the sake of civilization, progress and development.

ALL right, my practical friends, and now just what *are* civilization, progress and development? All morals aside? I challenge you, the wisest and craftiest and stupidest of you, to give me any definitions of those things that do not analyze down to *more inventions*, *more money*, *more greed*.

All morals aside, what man wants most is happiness. I challenge you to prove that we Americans are any happier than the American Indians before 1600. I challenge you to prove that we Americans of 1924 are any happier than the Americans of 1824 or of 1724 or of 1624.

I CHALLENGE you a third time. I challenge you to produce out of all the history of the whole world one single solitary case of a people who, putting morals aside, followed the "practical" aim of more civilization, more progress and more development and did not thereby rot themselves down to very "practical" destruction — "practical" progress and actual decay "developing" hand in hand, inexorably, together.

I challenge you a last time. Show me any hope for the future happiness, for even the material welfare of this country, that can lie in the "progress" and "development" of your "practical civilization." You think you can, but you can't. You've been talking loud and big for years and centuries, but in neither past, present or future can you show me any people with a greater happiness attained by developing on the basis that man is made of meat and appetites and nothing else besides.

THESE "practical" people have only one test, one god—results. All right. Look at the results in the world's present condition. Do we want more of same?

A FEW words from John Webb in connection with his story in this issue:

Long Branch, New Jersey.

It is a story of *Captain Mac* and "*Henri II*," a fictitious character founded on a probably unfounded rumor that was going the rounds in Haiti in 1919, and the story is based on events leading to an actual happening, *viz.*, the short-lived *caco* revolt of January, 1920, when some 1500 (the natives say two million) bandits attacked the capital and received the biggest defeat of the "*guerre des cacos*." I might mention that I was in Port-au-Prince the day of the battle, but left some hours before the actual attack.—JOHN WEBB.

EVERY now and then some one of our writers' brigade is being published in book form and whenever we know about it in time we're glad to pass the news on to you if the story appeared originally in *Adventure* or is of the general type in which we are all interested. Not a review or criticism, but just a statement. For example, just about now Harper & Brothers are bringing out "The River of Seven Stars," by Arthur O. Friel, with maps, sketches and 30 photographs, $4. It is not fiction but the narrative of his travels up the Orinoco and its big tributary the Vintuari to the Guayana wilderness where live the Maquiritare Indians, the trip concerning which he has already told us something at Camp-Fire. During that journey by sailboat, dugout and land marches into a region never before traversed by any English-speaking white man, he learned the truth about the legendary "lost white race" in the unknown uplands. Coming back he paddled his own canoe a thousand miles on flood-swollen rivers through a country upset with revolutionary fighting and banditry. So there is quite a bit of adventure as well as much information in the book.

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Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure*, mostly free, are open to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules,** thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 24 *T Wharf, Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL BUY: All back numbers containing stories by Leonard H. Nason.—Address H. H. YOUNG, 224 Marlborough Street, Boston, Mass.

WILL BUY: Copies containing stories by Leonard H. Nason.—Address H. E. MOORE, 8 Parker Avenue, Franklin Pa.

WILL SELL: All except four issues from Jan. 1918 to Dec. 1923. What is the best offer?—Address A. E. GREENWOOD, 228 North Main Street, Pleasantville, N. Y.

WILL SELL: Two hundred copies dating from 1921, in excellent condition; covers intact. What am I offered?—Address JULIO RODERIGUEZ, P. O. Box No. 1066, Habana, Cuba.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscripts. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3,000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations all over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book and maintain his Station in good repute. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the first issue of each month. Address letters regarding stations to J. Cox.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

(See Lost Trails)

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure.")

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4, 5. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
6, 7. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
8. Australia and Tasmania
9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
10. New Guinea
11. Philippine Islands
12. Hawaiian Islands and China
13. Japan
14—17. Asia. In Four Parts
18—25. Africa. In Eight Parts
26. Turkey
27. Asia Minor
28—30. Balkans. In Three Parts.
31. Scandinavia
32. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
33. Great Britain
34—36. South America. In Three Parts
37. Central America
38. 39. Mexico. In Two Parts
40—46. Canada. In Seven Parts
47. Alaska
48. Baffinland and Greenland
49—54. Western U. S. In Six Parts
55—58. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts
59—64. Eastern U. S. In Six Parts
Radio
Mining and Prospecting
Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
Forestry in the United States
Tropical Forestry
Aviation
Army Matters, United States and Foreign
American Anthropology North of Panama Canal
First Aids on the Trail
Health-Building Outdoors
Standing Information

China's Paper Industry

STILL another of the almost innumerable uses to which bamboo is put:

Question:—"I am very much interested in China, especially in regard to her resources. That is natural enough, I suppose. At present I am studying the paper and pulp side of forestry at college, but roughly speaking I expect to get over to China in about three years. If you would give me some information according to the following questions I would be greatly indebted to you:

1. *Minerals.* What are they? Are they exploited; by what companies and to what extent?

2. Is further exploitation advisable, considering political changes?

3. *Forest Lands.* What commercial trees grow there; localities? What can you tell me about labor, markets and sales?

4. *Paper.* Advisability of starting modern paper-making machiuery? Attitude of officials?

5. Any other information which you might consider useful, or any library references which you might give, will be very much appreciated.

I can speak some Chinese—Canton dialect—and have a fair knowledge of their customs.

If published, please withhold name and address."

Answer, by Mr. Halton:—For answer to your questions 1 and 2 will refer you to Commercial Handbook on China, part 2, published by the Government Printing Office, Washington. For mining enterprises see page 230 and for mineral products pages 263 to 269 inclusive.

There is a very good article on page 316 of the same book regarding forestry in China by John H. Reisner of the University of Nanking.

Regarding paper, which the Chinese invented, the processes of manufacture still remain crude. Rice straw is most commonly used, but only for coarse papers. Bamboo treated with chlorid of lime and soda to reduce it to pulp forms the material second in importance in the manufacture of paper in China. Fukien, Kiangsi and Szechwan Provinces produce the most paper in the order named. During 1918 China exported $3,624,266 value, almost all to territory in proximinity to China with large Chinese populations.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do NOT write to the magazine itself.

Parachute Jumping

HOW it feels to fall a few hundred feet before the 'chute opens:

Question:—"Are there companies who employ men to try out their parachutes; *i. e.*, parachute jumpers? If so, what are the demands made from these men and what is their compensation?

I am twenty-seven years old, five feet three inches, weight one hundred and twenty pounds; am white, not nervous and would like to qualify for such a job. Have I any chance?

Stamps enclosed for reply.

If you publish this please use the pseudonym."—PARACHUTE, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer, by Lieut.-Col. Schauffler:—I am afraid you would have a hard job getting a position as a parachute tester, for a certain gentleman known as "Mr. Sand-Bag" or "Mr. Dummy" usually does all the testing there is to be done with 'chutes before they are put on the market. This is done for the simple reason that it is easier to make the various weight tests with a number of different weights than it is to get a number of men to do the same work.

If you really want to get some experience along this line enlist in the United States Air Service. If you make good you can probably be sent to the "'Chute School." I've been through the course, and it is mighty interesting; but you don't get much of a "kick" when you jump.

The first time I went off I jumped from a D. H. 4 B at two thousand feet. I'd always wanted to know whether a man trying to kill himself by jumping from a high building would be dead before he hit the ground, so I did not open the 'chute up until I had fallen about four hundred and fifty feet. There wasn't a bit of sensation. It just felt as if I were floating along in space, and I didn't even lose my breath.

The second time I jumped—at Garden City, Curtiss Field, two years ago last October—I went off from a "Jennie" plane, piloted by Stewart Cogswell, at about fifteen hundred feet. This time I dived head first and fell about five hundred feet before I pulled the rip-cord. Yes, this time I did lose my breath. The wind sort of forced my mouth open when I tried to count out loud; but I got to fifteen nevertheless, even though the last ten counts were going mighty fast.

If you are jumping on a calm day everything goes along just like clockwork. You jump. You fall away. You pull the rip-cord. There's a rustle as the newspapers, which are placed between every loop of the shroud-lines, crackle out into the wind. You feel a slight jerk, and then you drift down toward the earth.

The first time I did it I had time enough to get out my pipe, fill it, light it and take a few puffs before I landed. Landing was no more than jumping off the dining-room table.

Jumping and landing in a high wind is a different story, however. You swing around underneath the 'chute like a huge pendulum, and it often makes you sea-sick. When you hit the ground you are dragged, nine times out of ten, and you have to be mighty quick in cutting loose from the harness. I believe the greatest danger in jumping from a parachute is that of landing in deep water, not being able to swim or not having a life-belt and not being able to untangle yourself from the shroud-lines.

I like your interest and fearlessness; but really the pay isn't worth it all, and the thrill of it all is nothing. If you want to learn how to fly, jump in a 'chute and do all such things. take the Army Air Service Cadet Course. They pay you while you are learning, and you have the same status as a cadet at West Point. I'm enclosing information issued by the Chief of Air Service.

Good luck and Happy Landings.

Liberia

DOES anybody have any more information to pass along to this inquirer?

Question:—"I shall be greatly obliged if you will furnish me with what information you are able to obtain with regard to general trade conditions in the republic of Liberia. From information which I have been able to gather from friends I understand that the country produces a very high grade of coffee. A particular friend of mine is anxious to learn something of the country and prospects as a manufacturer's agent and exporter, and if at all possible I would greatly appreciate whatever literature you might be able to furnish me on this very interesting country."—D. H. Burns, Welland, Ont., Canada.

Answer, by Mr. Simpson:—I'm sorry I can not give you the information you are in search of about Liberia. This is just a trifle out of my territory, which ranges from Sierra Leone to Old Calabar.

All I know about Liberia is that it produces the Krooboy, the navvy of the West Coast of Africa; and if the Krooboy's own version of his native land was to be taken seriously it was a good place to keep away from.

But this is not offered as authoritative, and I regret very much that I can not be more helpful on the subject.

The Mesquite Plant

A TREE with roots bigger than its trunk. And it bears beans:

Question:—"What can you tell me about the mesquite trees of the Southwest? And how do you pronounce that name? How big do they grow? Do they make good lumber? Do the loggers raft them down the rivers? Or do they use portable mills?"—John Thorpe, Medina, O.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—The mesquite trees at times grow to thirty or forty feet in height, but more often are half that or less, sometimes only a shrub. If the top is burned off, usually the root growth increases until it reaches enormous dimensions. J. Smeaton Chase tells of stabling his horse in a pit made by mesquite roots and sand, the roots arching, sand piling high around them, then a man digging the sand away on one side and in under the network of roots, to leave an open space for a stable.

At times a mesquite may show a trunk no thicker than a man's leg below the knee and six feet high, with a couple of wagon-loads of roots under the sand-heap around the tree.

The wood is very heavy and hard and is almost indestructible in the ground or in contact with it. It is much used by Indians, Mexicans and pioneer white men as beams and underpinning for houses, fencing and fuel. At times for furniture, but it is hard to work.

The name is pronounced mess-keet.

The plant is leguminous, like a pea or bean, and has beans for its seeds. There are two kinds of mesquite in the Southwest—*prosopis juliflora* and *prosopis pubescens*. The last-named is commonly known as the screw bean, as the pods twist like a pod auger of ancient use.

The beans are rich fodder and are often eaten by human beings also. They are rich in grape sugar. Indians make them a staple article of diet. The Spanish name for mesquite is *algarroba*.

The wood is brown or red in color. The tree or shrub exudes a gum resembling gum arabic, and this is collected for export in Texas and Mexico. Mexicans call the screw-bean variety *tornilla* (*torneclya*). The mesquite is thorny, especially so in the case of second growth.

The principal grass of the plains is sometimes known as mesquite grass, at other times as buffalo grass and again as grama grass. The botanical name of this grass is creeping cyodon.

Mesquite is never rafted or floated down a stream. I doubt its floating at all in most cases, it is so heavy; and there are no rivers with water enough to raft logs in within reach of most mesquite.

Nor are there portable sawmills to cut mesquite logs. They are not of a size to warrant it. Mesquite often grows in dense thickets along waterways, washes and draws. It is valuable in this way, as it affords shade for stock in an otherwise shadeless land.

When you see a moving picture showing a cowboy in Arizona with woolly chaps on his legs, make up your mind that somebody had a crazy streak. Take Angora chaps into a mesquite thicket and they would be bald in short order. The mesquite would soon denude them of hair, wool or feathers, whatever the idiot film man wore.

Many a man, out of grub on the desert, has been mighty glad to see a clump of mesquite and gather the beans, even though they were dry fodder and hard to chew.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Literature of the Square-Rigger

HERE'S a list of books compiled by a man who writes of the clipper ships himself, his stories appearing in the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Adventure* and other magazines:

Question:—"Will you kindly tell me if there is a book published in England or Scotland giving a record of all or nearly all the square-rig ships built or owned in England, Ireland or Scotland; their size, rig and the record trips? Also if there is such a book published in the U. S. A. along the same lines dealing with American-built ships such as the *Glory of the Seas?*

I have a book just out by F. W. Wallace, giving a record and such of all Nova Scotia and New Brunswick built ships, their record trips and captains, etc. It is sure interesting.

Also can you give me the names of any good sea stories, either facts or fiction—that is, real deep-water square-rig yarns—the names of the writers and publishers and where I can get them?

I trust I am not asking too much of you.

I am enclosing postage, also addressed envelop for reply."—W. S. Davidson, Halifax, N. S., Canada.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—No one book that I know of contains all the information you ask for. Only Lloyd's Register of Shipping, for years, contains the name, rig, tonnage and flag of all ships built in the British Isles. Lloyd's does not give records. Basil Lubbock has published three books which you can get from James Brown, publisher, Glasgow: "The China Clippers," "The Colonial Clippers," and "The Blackwall Frigates." These books will not mention every sailing-ship, but a great many, with records, etc. No book could contain the data of every sailing-ship built.

For American ships, write Mr. Beriah Brown, of the United States sea section of "Ask Adventure." The only book I have knowledge of is Clark's "Clipper Ship Era."

As for real deep-water square-rigger yarns, you will find it harder to separate the real from the fake. F. W. Wallace has a good book, "The Viking Blood;" Conrad's "Nigger of the Narcissus" is real; Bill Adams' "Fenceless Meadows" has recently been published, and is quite real. Dana's "Two Years before the Mast;" Bone's "Brassbounder;" Lubbock's "Round the Horn before the Mast;" Clark Russell's yarns (more or less text-book sailorizing but still very good reading); Morgan Robertson's stories (same applies). John Fleming Wilson's new book (posthumous, of course) is full of real stuff. Morley Roberts wrote some decent stuff too.

I suggest you visit some reputable bookseller and ask him to get you a list of sea reading. I can not tell you of all there are. The bookseller can get anything for you. Good luck.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Ranching in Australia

SAME work as in the U. S., but different terms; as stations—out-back towns—selectors—stock-riders:

Question:—"I expect to come to Australia to find land adapted to sheep and cattle raising. First I want to land a job on a cattle ranch to become acquainted with the customs and the country; after that, to outfit with saddle-horse and equipment to look up some suitable land in an out-of-the-way place. I have about $1,500 to start with.

Is $1,500 enough money to start with?

Is there good land that I can claim, or buy cheaply? If so, how much per acre?

Do they ranch there as in western United States? If not, how?

Are the ranges open or fenced?

What kind of saddles are most commonly used? Western stock? Would it be advisable to ship mine from here?

Would I be allowed to take my pistol and rifle into the country?

How much money do I need on my person to enter the country?

Which port would be the best for me to land at so as to be close to the cattle country?

How far up the Darling River is the cattle and sheep country?

Would it be possible to get a job on a ranch and become acquainted with the country first? What are the wages generally?

Are stockmen against claim-takers or settlers?

Do stockmen and ranch hands dress something like what they do in western United States?

Do you think riding out alone into the open country to look for a claim advisable?

Is there any adventure to be had in the open country?

Can I buy American shells for my rifle and pistol there? What are those most commonly used in Australia?

What class of cattle are in Australia on the large ranches? Are they like our Western cattle?

How many acres would I need to go into the stock-raising business in a small way—say just enough profit to expand a little each year? I understand it takes quite a few acres for just a few head. Is this true?

Does the Australian Government offer any inducements to Americans coming into the country to settle on the land?

I am twenty-six years of age, and am married. I intend to send for my wife after looking around a bit, and make that our home."—Marc K. Molyneaux, Detroit, Mich.

Answer, by Mr. Norman:—There is always room in Australia for the man who is willing to go on the land and is not afraid of work. To qualify that, I must add that it is no longer easy to make a large amount of money in a short period of time.

If you want a genial climate that is generally charming for most of the year, if the institutions and opportunities of a free democracy attract you, and if you are game to put all there is of you into the task of making a home and a career—if in particular you want to rear a family in a country that gives every kid a chance—then Australia is ready for you. If you are a loafer, a trickster, a mere speculator or a trouble-maker, Australia doesn't want you at all.

I don't want any honest American to come over here with any misconception of the sort of place he's coming to. So I shall not pretend that the prospects are all of rose. In nearly all the Australian States the man who farms sheep and cattle is subject to one big risk—the risk of drought. This risk will stand until there is some such general great scheme of irrigation and water-conservation as is beyond our present hope. A great deal is being done with artesian water in some places, but the new settler must not build on that.

On the other hand, the profits to a good man in average good years are so liberal as securely to insure him against the risk of drought when it comes. The price of wool is very high, and apparently is going to stay high for some time. One handicap of the cattleman lies in the fact that chilled meat will not carry safely to the big world-centers of consumption. It takes a few weeks longer to get beef to the European markets than it takes from the Argentine, and that makes all the difference.

IT SEEMS to me that $1,500 is enough for a man to start out with in the average case, if he and his family are fit and sound and his wife is not a parasite. Good land is still to be had on very easy terms.

What you call ranching is broadly similar here to what you know of it in the States. The ranges—we call them runs or stations—are fenced in the case of comparatively small holdings. But often Australian stations lie far back from the centers of population and are of huge area. Many stations like that are open, and the stockmen or boundary-riders keep the herds within their limits.

The saddle is a baby for size compared with some of the Western American saddles I have seen. I am not an expert along about here, but I have heard a crowd of cattle-men in an out-back town roar their mirth at the spectacle of American cowboys' saddles as shown in the cinema. The Australian stockman can ride anything, and the lighter the saddle, the better he likes it.

I was at a bush-hotel away in the far West of Queensland one morning, and the daughter of the house was serving in the bar, very cheery and gay. I found she had ridden fifty miles bareback in her night-dress during the night, to fetch a doctor to her father, who had broken his leg. It was a hurry call, and she went in what she had on when she tumbled out of bed and made no bones about it. When I asked her if she didn't think she ought to have a rest, she jeered at me. If you ride with the sort of saddle we see on the screen, I should not advise you to bring it to Australia.

Certainly you can bring your pistol and rifle into the country—why not? If you don't, there are a score of shops in every decent town, in any one of which you can buy an arsenal if you want it. You take out a license for your gun and pay a small fee, and that is all the trouble there is about it.

I have never heard of a case in which a man was asked how much money he had on landing.

By all means take a job before you attempt to open out for yourself. Wages are about what they are in America. In Australia the cost of living is lower than in the United States—say twenty per cent. lower as a good safe guess.

Most station-owners and selectors—what you call settlers or claim-takers—have been stockmen at some time or other. Most of these work as hard as any of their men.

I heard of the case of a big cattle-man from western Queensland who enlisted in the Great War as a private and was not suspected of being a man of property. He came back badly wounded, and when he was offered a pension he pointed out that he made about a hundred thousand dollars—or its equivalent in our money—most years.

YOU get the real thing in democracy out back. In England a few years ago the officer commanding a tough lot of Australians had his crowd drawn up in expectation of the arrival of the King. He thought it well to give 'em a few hints about deportment in the presence of royalty.

"And," he ended up, "for ——'s sake don't call me Bill!"

All Australian cattlemen and stock-riders dress like ordinary human people, and never dream of wearing any fancy uniform at all.

Easy to find the sort of land you want, and the best way is to get out to see it, when you arrive here. Simply keep away from the drought areas.

In any experience a man can find adventure anywhere, if he goes out to look for it. Apart from snakes—which are really not troublesome at all—there are no dangerous wild things in Australia. Alligators in northern Queensland, of course; but viewed in bulk as a dangerous nuisance, they are negligible.

The most dangerous pest the cattle and sheep men know is the common and —— prolific rabbit. He is so plentiful in places that I have known young fellows who have netted a hundred dollars a week trapping him for his skin. Not your jack-rabbit, which seems to be own brother to our hare.

You can get any shells for any rifle and pistol made on earth, right in any of the big Australian cities. A man way-back in Queensland wrote to *Adventure* some time ago asking how and where he could get certain named American weapons. I went to the two nearest gunsmiths in Sydney and found that they had the weapons needed, at prices only a trifle higher than those named by the *Adventure* expert. This is a civilized country.

I shall cover the remainder of your queries by telling you something about conditions in this mother State of New South Wales. The facts and figures are fairly applicable to conditions in other States. I shall give prices in our currency of pounds sterling.

Under the laws now in force land in the eastern and central divisions of the State may be acquired by the following methods:

(a) Under residential conditions—(1) conditional and additional purchase; (2) classified conditional purchase; (3) homestead selection; (4) settlement purchase under Closer Settlement Acts; (5) homestead farm; (6) suburban holding; (7) irrigation farm; (8) returned soldier's special holding; (9) conditional purchase lease; (10) conditional lease; (11) residential on gold and mineral-fields lease; (12) Crown lease; (13) settlement lease.

(b) Under non-residential conditions—(1) conditional purchase without residence; (2) improvement purchase on gold-fields; (3) auction sale; (4) after auction sale; (5) special sale without competition; (6) exchange; (7) annual lease; (8) inferior-lands lease; (9) occupation license; (10) scrub lease; (11) special lease; (12) improvement lease; (13) Snoalands lease; (14) week-end lease; (15) townlands lease; (15) special conditional-purchase lease.

The maximum area which can be purchased conditionally differs in the eastern and central divisions according to the method of acquisition shown above. In the western division land may be alienated by auction or occupied under lease.

Unreserved Crown lands in the eastern and central divisions not held under pastoral or other lease are available for conditional purchase, and land held under annual lease or occupation-license may also be acquired in this way, if not otherwise reserved. Land under conditional lease in any division may be purchased conditionally by the leaseholder only.

A residential conditional purchase may be taken up by males of or over age sixteen, or by females of or over age eighteen, provided that a woman is unmarried or a widow or is judicially separated from her husband; for a non-residential conditional purchase the minimum age limit is twenty-one years.

I give you those dry details for what they are worth; any legal friend can make them clear to you. The fact is that every Australian Government is eager to get *bona-fide* settlers on the land. The labor unions object to indiscriminate immigration schemes at this time only in so far as they will help to swell the industrial population in congested areas. The man who honestly wants to settle on the land is welcome everywhere.

WE ARE holding a continent in area somewhat larger than the whole United States territory, and we are holding it with a handful of six million people. We are all beginning to realize that it won't do. We all see that there must be a great increase of population back from the coast, population in the rural spaces that feed the villages and little towns.

Now a few facts regarding New South Wales as a place to live and bring up a family in.

Climate—New South Wales is peculiarly free from cyclonic disturbances, although occasionally a cyclone may result from monsoonal disturbances, or may reach the State from the northeast tropics or from the antarctic low-pressure belt which lies to the south of Australia.

The seasons are: Summer—December, January and February; Autumn—March, April and May; Winter—June, July and August; Spring—September, October and November.

Annual Rainfall

Inches	Sq. miles
Over 70	668
60 to 70	1,765
50 to 60	4,329
40 to 50	15,804
30 to 40	30,700
20 to 30	77,202
15 to 20	57,639
10 to 15	77,268
Under 10	44,997

Temperature: Mean standard, 63.1. Average reading of maximum thermometer, 70.0. Average reading of minimum thermometer, 56.2. All in shade.

The north coast districts are favored with a warm, moist climate, the rainfall being from 40 to 70 inches annually. The mean temperature for the year is from 66 to 69, the Summer mean being 75 to 78 and the Winter mean 56 to 59. On the south coast the rainfall varies from 30 to 60 inches, and the mean temperature ranges between 57 and 63, the Summer mean being from 66 at the foot of the ranges to 70 on the seacoast, and the Winter from 48 to 54 over the same area.

On the south coast are the most favored dairy lands, others to the north. Farms are comparatively high in value in these favored regions, but profitable holdings are not beyond the reach of the new settler with a small capital who is not afraid of work. In parts of the north coast, as from that on in a long belt up through Queensland, cotton is being grown with remarkable success, and bananas are a prolific crop.

ALL the statistics—too voluminous to be summarized here—seem to show that New South Wales is in the running for the healthiest climate in the world. The death-rate for the whole State, which was 13.93 per 1,000 in the period 1870-74, was in 1920 10.14. This was the lowest in Australia, with the one exception of Tasmania—9.67. Tasmania is a little, drowsy country with a small population who do not expend great energy at any time and enjoy a climate that makes it difficult to die.

I can not, however, commend Tasmania to you as a place of settlement. All the best agricultural and orchard land is taken up, and there are few opportunities for the young. The tiny population remains tiny, with little or no fluctuation. The wide-awake settler wants to go where the big incentives are. For the man who has enough money to live on in comfort, and who enjoys a quiet life among neighbors genial and docile, Tasmania offers ideal conditions.

In all the Australian States alcoholic beverages are freely obtainable under close conditions as to license. There is a prohibition movement, but no likelihood of prohibition being adopted during the lifetime of any man now young.

There is a great and growing wine industry. The last year of record, there were 10,783 acres under vines with a product of 674,188 gallons. Wine and dried fruit offer a promising and attractive prospect to the new settler with a little capital.

Other standard profitable crop industries are bananas, barley, green food, hay, maize, oats, fruit, potatoes, sugar-cane, tobacco and wheat. The possibilities of wheat are incalculable, also wool.

An education test is firmly employed for the rigid exclusion of Asiatics and all undesirable white or colored aliens.

Education is free, compulsory and secular, with an open door right through from the primary schools to the university. The State technical-education system is carried into the main provincial towns.

Dairying is a most important industry. It has to be admitted that for the man of small means and his family the work is apt to be fairly hard, the chances of holiday and recreation few. As indicating the size of the industry, I give you these figures for the last year of record:

Number of dairy cows in milk, 542,092. Total yield of milk, 250,203,000 gallons. Butter made, 84,268,041 pounds. Cheese made, 6,407,209 pounds.

Every encouragement is given to farmers' families by the instruction provided at the State agricultural colleges and experimental farms.

The main purposes for which agricultural holdings were used last year were: Agriculture only, 11,032; dairying only, 7,738; grazing only, 27,170; agriculture and dairying, 5,112; agriculture and grazing, 19,336; dairying and grazing, 2,271; agriculture, dairying and grazing, 1,549; poultry, pig or bee-farming, 1,348.

Sheep-farming is our greatest industry. In 1922 there were 29,249,253 sheep at the beginning of the year, and 7,907,000 lambs were marked during its course—a far smaller record than that of any other years for more than a decade, owing largely to the great depletion of flocks by the last big drought. There was great variety in the size of flocks—1 to 1,000 sheep, 19,905 flocks; 1,001 to 2,000, 3,459; 2,001 to 5,000, 2,310; 5,001 to 10,000, 722; 10,001 to 20,000, 349; 20,001 to 50,000, 149; 50,001 to 100,000, 26; 100,001 and over, 2.

The total number of sheep in the State was 33,851,828. Away back in 1891 in the days of the great holdings the total number was 61,831,416. The great increase in small holdings has meant a great decrease in the number of sheep; but—to compensate—a great increase in the number of families that are able to make a decent living by sheep-raising. Nobody regrets the old days of great runs and absentee landlords. Thanks to the high price of wool, sheep-raising is a much more profitable business for the small man than it was in the days of the great total exports.

I HAVE rattled off these few facts for you as pointers. I will not take the responsibility of advising any man to leave his own country, but I can still understand the attraction to the right kind of American of what is now really a wider prospect, a freer air. In Australia there is no bitterness of feeling toward any other people, save such bitterness against the Germans as still survives the war.

One reads and hears at times of anti-British feeling in the United States. You will find no anti-American feeling in Australia. A man is rated on his own showing by what he can do and what he is worth. Opportunities of enjoyment are endless, for the Australians are above all things else a pleasure-loving people.

I shall be glad to help you in any way I can. Write if there is any particular matter as to which you want information. To ask one to tell you of Australia in a letter is much as if you should ask for a summary of ancient history in a thousand words.

Canoeing to James Bay

DANGEROUS business:

Question:—"Would like some information regarding a proposed canoe trip through Canada. I am not certain that the query comes under your section as stated in "*Adventure*."

We plan on following certain streams and rivers that can be easily connected with from the shore of Lake Superior to James or Hudson Bay. We would like information regarding the length of time (approximately) that such a trip would take; the cost; necessary equipment; the best make of canoe to take on such a proposed trip.

We have placed the time of departure at next Spring and would also like to know the earliest possible date that the rivers and streams are free from ice and open to canoes. Would also like to know what possible game there is that can be killed and eaten at any time of the year.

If a note of this inquiry is made in "*Adventure*" I would appreciate the omission of my name. Thank you.—L. G. N., Cleveland, O.

Answer, by Mr. Sangster:—Yours *re* a proposed James Bay trip. Do not attempt such without using a heavy canoe with two guides in it. Too many have tried this and rued it.

Game can not be killed before September. Heavy rapids and treacherous "going" bar one from being sensible in attempting this trip without guides who know the waters. Two young chaps from N. Y. C. tried it just last month and walked out one hundred miles to the railroad with the outfit lost and canoe wrecked. I told them not to tackle it; they persisted and paid the penalty I knew they would.

Don't try it.

The Cripple Creek Freak

A MAN who kept on sinking his shaft for no reason but a hunch—and struck it rich at last:

Question:—"There is a large deposit of old dike in my locality. It has a large quartz vein about northeast and four calcite veins running up to this quartz. Do you think there would be any valuable minerals in these veins?

There was a man here who claimed he had been in the Cobalt district, and he said that this looked good to him; but he got into some trouble and had to leave before we could do any work.

Where can I get some of this rock assayed?

The largest calcite vein is about a foot wide and runs to a railroad cut."—FREEMAN HARRIMAN, East Franklin, Me.

Answer, by Mr. Shaw:—Contacts of diverse kinds of rock, or contact zones caused by a dike cutting through a prevailing type of so-called "country" rock, where a dike makes a juncture with a lode or vein of mineral-bearing type, are sources of pay minerals. Calcite is a vein filling which like quartz carries paying minerals, often of high grade. The conditions given in your rather sketchy description apparently offer an area which might carry economic minerals, though of what extent or character you can determine only through prospecting and working.

The fact that no mineral appears on surface does not preclude its existence at depth. Some minerals are richer below than on surface, especially those soluble, like copper; also, if the vein is of a porous nature surface waters carry minerals downward to form richer deposits beneath, through mechanical action of gravity. Usually, the breaking-down through oxidization of surface mineral causes a richer deposit directly on surface—*e. g.*, a gold vein, where the gold is held in pyrites—iron or copper sulfids—will generally be the richest on surface.

On the other hand, there was no surface indication for Stratton to follow or to encourage him to keep on sinking, before he struck the bonanza ore at depth in Cripple Creek. That district had been passed over as of no value during the Pike's Peak excitement, years before.

The Pre-Cambrian rocks of the Laurentian Plateau, which cover a great portion of Canada and extend into upper New York State, may also extend to the easterly and enter Maine; in fact, I believe it quite possible. The Cobalt series has conglomerate, graywacke and slate or quartzite, and is cut by dikes that are quartz-porphyry, pegmatite, etc.; and although gold (and silver) is found in quartz, calcite is nearly always present. The gold values are always in pyrite, or gold is free in oxidized pyrite. You can tell what you have only by doing some work.

I wouldn't bother to assay unless you have some mineral showing. Gold and silver assays cost about $1.50—$1.75. Send to Lucius Pitkin, 47 Fulton St., N. Y. C. I enclose an article on prospecting. Best wishes.

The Reserve Officer's Uniform

A COUPLE of points of etiquette:

Question:—"To settle an argument will you please answer the following questions?

1. Can a U. S. reserve officer wear the plain U. S. collar badges, or must he wear the small letters O. R. on the U. S. background?

2. Can a reserve officer take up paying passengers in his own airplane at a beach resort and wear the uniform?"—W. J. NOLL, Scappoose, Ore.

Answer, by Mr. Fleischer:—1. A reserve officer, when wearing the uniform, is not only entitled, but compelled by regulations, to wear the same uniform, therefore also the same collar ornaments, as officers of the regular Army. The plain U. S. is in order; the superimposed O. R. has been done away with.

2. A reserve officer when not on active duty may wear the uniform only during social functions of military character, or other ceremonies of military character, such as Memorial Day, Armistice Day, Independence Day, or when visiting a military post.

A reserve officer engaged as you state, has no business nor the right to wear uniform.

"ASK ADVENTURE" editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory not now covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address F. K. NOYES, *Adventure*, New York.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

IT WAS never intended that this department should be confined to American songs, but simply to songs that have grown up with or among the people—that have had sufficient vitality to live through a fairly long period of transmission, not in a printed book but in the mouths of men, that have, in other words, a close connection with the folk.

Such songs usually appear, not in one form, but in many versions; they seem to have no single authoritative text. In this respect they differ noticeably from the productions of an "author." They have at least been modified or partially remade as time went on by their singers.

Few songs probably of any real merit have been composed *entirely* by the folk. While we know that it is possible for a group, acting together and at one time, to compose, we realize that the results of such action are very crude indeed. Seldom are they good enough to survive for even a short period. What does survive is a curious blend of individual author and folk, the author's part being more that of a mouthpiece than that of a creator. At any rate he does not seem to have impressed his individuality upon the song or ballad.

Theoretically any songs that meet this test are welcome in the department, but certain practical reasons forbid including many not written in English. Still I think that we should all enjoy seeing some of the songs of the Canadian *voyageurs*, or bits of genuine Spanish-American material. And certainly we should all welcome many more contributions from our British comrades.

Men are men the world over, and it is not surprizing that folk-songs of different lands should be much the same, that the certain differences discoverable should be far outweighed by more remarkable similarities. Negroes of the British colonies sing songs much like those of their American brothers; the songs of the American "cowboy" and of the Australian "stockman" differ often only in diction; nursery rhymes and those amusing and complex formulæ used by children in "counting out" seem to be common property in many lands.

HERE is a contribution from New South Wales, a blending of folk and author which shows a little more of the author and a little less of the folk than the average. It is, as is many another cowboy song, a parody. Enough change, however, has taken place to give it a place in our collection. Those who wish to compare it with the original may do so by looking up White-Melville's "Wrap Me Up in My Tarpaulin Jacket." I append a portion of the glossary included by my correspondent.

The Dying Stockman

(text of J. S.)

A strapping young stockman lay dying,
His saddle supporting his head;
His two mates around him were crying
As he rose on his pillow and said:

"Wrap me up with my stockwhip and blanket,
And bury me deep down below,
Where the dingoes and crows can't molest me
In the shade where the coolibahs grow.

"Oh, had I the flight of the bronzewing
Far o'er the plains would I fly
Straight to the land of my childhood
And there would I lay down and die.

"Then cut down a couple of saplings,
Place one at my head and my toe,
Carve on them cross, stockwhip and saddle,
To show there's a stockman below.

"Hark! There's the wail of a dingo
Watchful and weird—I must go,
For it tolls the death-knell of the stockman
From the gloom of the scrub down below.

"There's tea in the battered old billy;
Place the pannikins out in a row,
And we'll drink to the next merry meeting
In the place where all good fellows go.

"And oft in the shades of the twilight,
When the soft winds are whispering low,
And the darkening shadows are falling,
Sometimes think of the stockman below."

Stockman: In America a cowboy. *Dingo:* An Australian native dog. *Crow:* A jet-black carrion bird. *Coolibah:* A tree-type indigenous to Australia. *Bronzewing:* A native pigeon so called on account of the coloring of the wings. *Billy:* A cylindrical tin canister with wire handle used out back for cooking purposes; full name, billy-can. *Pannikin:* A tin drinking-cup.

THERE'S just room for an old soldier song of the Philippines. I'm afraid it has no claim to be called a folk-song, though it was probably made bit by bit by many different men. Times have changed since.

A Filipino Family

There was once a Filipino *hombre*
Who ate rice *pescado y legumbre.*
His trousers were wide, and his shirt hung outside,
And this, I may say, was *costumbre.*

He lived in a nipa *bahay*
  Which served as a stable and sty;
He slept on a mat with the dogs and the cat
  And the rest of the family near by.

His daddy, *un buen' Filipino*
  Who never mixed *tubig* with *bino*,
Said, "I am no insurrecto—no got gun or bolo,"
  Yet used both to kill a *vecino*.

His *mujer* once kept a *tienda*
  Underneath a large stone *hacienda;*
She chewed *buyo* and sold for jawbone and gold
  To *soldados* who said, "*No intienda.*"

Of *niños* she had *dos* or *tres*,
  Good types of the Tagalo race;
In dry or wet weather, in the altogether,
  They'd romp and they'd race and they'd chase.

Su hermana fue lavandera,
  And slapped clothes in *fuerte manera*
On a rock in a stream where the carabaos dream,
  Which gave them a perfume *lijera*.

His brother, who was a *cochero*,
  Buscaré in Manila *dinero;*
His prices were high when a cop was near by
  To help scare the poor *pasajero*.

He once owned a *bulic manoc*
  With a haughty, valorous look
Which lost him a name, *y mil pesos tambien*,
  So he changed to monte for luck.

When his pueblo last had a *fiesta*
  His family tried to digest a
Mule that had died of glanders inside—
  And now his *familia no esta*.

SEND all contributions of old songs, and all questions about them, direct to R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, California. DO NOT send them to the magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

OCTOBER 10TH ISSUE

Besides the **new serial** and **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

JUDIQUE ON THE FLOOR — ***J. H. Greene***
With fiddles and fists on the Mississippi.

GO-FEVER Conclusion — ***J. Allan Dunn***
The fight at the lava-holes.

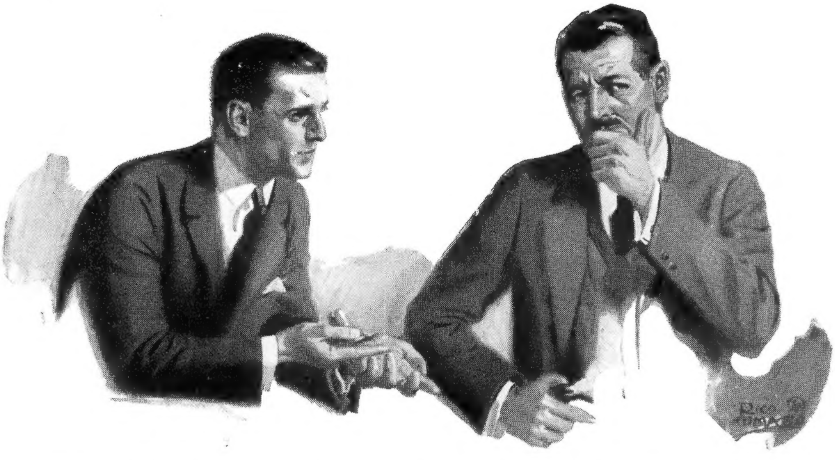
THE GRUDGE OF YA ISRANG — ***Warren H. Miller***
The cholera curse strikes the Malays.

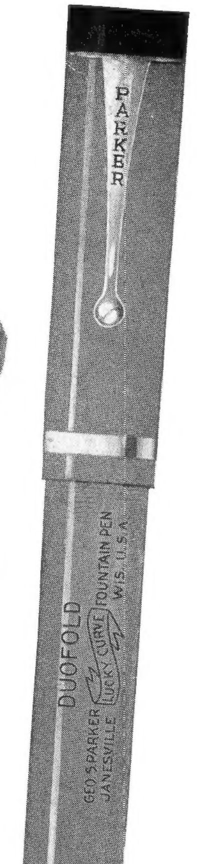
OUT OF DATE — ***F. St. Mars***
Kifaru the rhinoceros in action.

THE CANNIKIN CLINK CLINK — ***William Byron Mowery***
Trick and counter-trick of the rival fur companies in Canada.

Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will contain *long stories* by Leonard H. Nason, Talbot Mundy, John Webb, H. Bedford-Jones, Douglas Oliver, H. C. Bailey, W. C. Tuttle, Bruce Johns and Charles Victor Fischer; a long narrative poem by Berton Braley; and short stories by Royce Brier, George E. Holt, F. R. Buckley, Nevil Henshaw, Lewis H. Kilpatrick, Chester T. Crowell, Gordon Young, William Byron Mowery, Georges Surdez, Leo Walmsley, John Dorman, Barry Scobee and others; stories of doughboys on the Western Front, hard-case skippers in Haiti, British secret service in India, prospectors on the American desert, Scotch engineers in the Red Sea, desert riders in Morocco, knights-at-arms in medieval France, gold-hunters in Lower California, deputy sheriffs in the Kentucky mountains, gun-runners across the Rio Grande, adventurers the world around.





Red and
Black Color
Combination
Reg. Trade
Mark U. S.
Pat. Office

While He looked for a Pen that would Write

The Other Man changed his Mind

How a $25,000 deal was lost!

—yes, it really happened, and a Parker Duofold would have saved the day

THE MAN who lost the transaction supplied us with the facts: "The buyer," he said, "had accepted my proposition and was ready to sign up. But I had to step out of the room in search of a pen that would write. While I was gone, the other man changed his mind. And the deal—a $25,000 transaction—was off! Never again will I get caught without a sure-fire pen in my pocket."

Every day new situations arise when the unerring Duofold Pen is worth its weight in gold! When this hand-balanced, rapid, jewel-smooth writer beats the clock to the finish—to close a deal, pass a test, or catch the last mail. And it gives one's penmanship the speed and character that win with the world.

Duofold's Over-size Barrel holds that extra ration of ink that can save the day in a crisis; and the "Lucky Curve" Feed—Geo. S. Parker's creation—delivers the ink with sure-fire certainty.

Notwithstanding that Duofold is the classic of pens, it's the most economical ever known. For its point—if not mistreated—is guaranteed for 25 years' WEAR—not merely for mechanical perfection. What is $7 compared to results like these?

Better replace your old pen with a Duofold—it puts you on even terms with the best of them. Wherever this black-tipped lacquer-red beauty is seen its owner is esteemed. And its color makes it hard to lose.

Any good pen counter will sell you a Parker Duofold on 30 days' approval. Step in and get the Duofold now—you can never tell until too late what delay may cost you.

THE PARKER PEN COMPANY · JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN
NEW YORK, CHICAGO · *Parker Duofold Pencils match the Duofold Pen,* $3.50 · SAN FRANCISCO, SPOKANE
THE PARKER FOUNTAIN PEN COMPANY, LTD., TORONTO, CANADA

Rivals the beauty of the Scarlet Tanager

Parker LUCKY CURVE Duofold

OVER-SIZE $7

With The 25 Year Point

Duofold Jr. $5
Same except for size

Lady Duofold $5
With ring for chatelaine

CAUTION

No pen but Parker Duofold has the 25-year Duofold point; the Duo-Sleeve Cap—an extra sleeve for an Ink-Tight seal; the "Lucky Curve" Feed; or the Press-Button Filler, capped inside the barrel—out of sight—out of harm's way. So look for this stamp on the barrel—"Geo. S. Parker—DUOFOLD—Lucky Curve." Then imitations can't deceive you.

When he turns to read the paper—

a shock awaits him!

The front page is covered with a description of himself—the police are hunting him! And the only thing he had done was to run out of a restaurant just as the lights went out. He was running after a girl, but the police thought he was a burglar. Will he go to the police and tell his story, or will he try to evade capture? You will want to read this story of an unusual man and an adventuresome girl written by Mabel Dunham Thayer. "It Can't Be Done" is the name of the story and you will find it in the September

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